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Wagner's music drama of
the Ring

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# Wagner's Music Drama of the Ring

# Wagner's Music Drama of the Ring

By L. Archier Leroy

With Wood Engravings

By Paul Nash

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LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

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# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

*My dear Barbor,*

*There are certain personalities and works of philosophy and art of such outstanding importance and prodigal empery that, while they stand very well by themselves down the ages, do not in any way suffer by occasional reintroduction and annotation. For each succeeding generation, since times have a way of changing, while producing personalities and works expressive of the reactions of that generation, produces also its typical reaction to these lofty landmarks of man's creation. Human consciousness would be the richer and religion, I suspect, none the poorer, if, for example, we had every quarter of a century a life of Christ as expressive of the attitude of each of these periods to the man of Nazareth and Gethsemane as Renan's was of the attitude of late nineteenth century Europe to the Christ.*

*We have seen in recent years how the work of Gilbert Murray in Greek tragedy and comedy has led to a minor but significant revival of interest in a literature composed exclusively of masterpieces among a section of the public that, generally speaking, boasts small Latin and less Greek. Miss Sybil Thorndike would probably not have found a public for her Hecuba and Medea, had they spoken the turgid—if scholarly—translations of the Victorian era. One suspects that a rendering of Rabelais from the pen of Norman Douglas or D. B. Wyndham Lewis would yield in like manner a more vivid revelation to readers of our own time than the admirable volume which now must serve.*

*While one may come by a more intimate view of a particular era of social and æsthetic valuation from contemporaneous art and history, there are no less valuable lessons to be learned from the study of the relation of one age to the master works of another.*

*It seems to me that one of these talismans for futurity will be Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelungs," and, acting upon an impulse born more of enthusiasm than erudition, I recently collected various jotted impressions with a view to writing a monograph on Wagner as Man of the Theatre. But, in that awkward way books have of suddenly launching themselves into a life of their own and domineering over their scribes, this monograph compelled me to select lengthy examples, and these examples eventually formulated themselves of necessity into an annotation of Wagner's tetralogy. With this I have combined the re-edited notes on Wagner's life and life-work, in which I have sought to insist on this theatrical aspect of the master as opposed to, or perhaps I might more justly say, as including, his musicianship. It was not my ambition to interpret Wagner to our times in the way that I have suggested above; such a task would indeed have been ambitious to the point of absurdity. On the other hand, this book steers between the profound and comprehensive musical and biographical studies of, to cite one distinguished authority, Mr. Ernest Newman, and those advisedly curtailed handbooks of the operas, many of which are on the market. Briefly, I have sought to expound the general contents, musical, literary and philosophic, of "The Ring," and to give some clues to the contingent, particularly the theatrical, aspects of the work. I know from our long talks that you share this view, and I have made no bones of adopting your phrase, "the tyranny of the music-mind," in my exegesis.*

*I should like to think that this book will go out into the open in good company. Paul Nash, whose work as theatrical decora-*

*tor will need no introduction to you, has invented some designs which will give a dramaturgical interest to the book beyond its literary merits, and I want you to add your quota of support in the form of an introduction on those practical aspects of musico-dramatic staging upon which I know you have formed some very definite and entertaining conclusions.*

*Yours very sincerely,*

*L. A. L.*

*London*, 1925.

# *INTRODUCTION*

*To essay the introduction of yet another addition to the library of Wagnerian literature is a task almoſt as temeritous as that of launching the book in queſtion. But heſitation fades in view of the aim of this author to eſtabliſh Wagner's claim to conſideration as a man of the theatre, which is only another way of saying a man of the world, rather than as a denizen of the circumſcribed world of music.*

*As a chronicler of theatrical events, who has also watched very carefully the trend of popular and profeſſional inclination, and particularly during the poſt-war period, it has been the pleaſant lot of the introducer to obſerve ſuch a development of the will-to-excellence in many provinces of dramatic and muſico-dramatic art as ſeems to indicate that the very near future is pregnant with rich gifts for the impreſario poſſeſſed of diſcerning, reſponſible, and determined ſhowmanſhip—and for the public for whom he caters. In this future, Wagnerian drama muſt and will have a conſiderable ſhare, and a work which aims at preſenting Wagner's moſt ambitious achievement to neophyte or amateur, or illuminating certain aſpects of it to the more ſchooled members of the audience, may perhaps be timely now that ſuch a renaſcence of public eſtimation is to be expected. But that the fulleſt advantage may be taken by this ſame reſponſible, diſcerning, and determined ſhowmanſhip of the promiſe of the preſent, certain baſic problems of the finance and art of muſic-drama muſt be courageouſly faced.*

*Of all forms of popular entertainment in this country, opera*

*to-day raises the largest number of problems, upon the solution of which depends not merely its fullest and freest development, but its very existence as an art form appealing to and seeking the support of the community as a whole. A few years ago, it might have been maintained that the chief problem before the opera or music-drama promoter in London and the provincial centres was the problem of finding a public. To-day that is not so. The spread of musical education of sorts in both elementary and secondary schools has certainly served to stimulate a much wider musical curiosity throughout the population than was evident in a former generation. This factor increases in geometrical progression as the years pass.*

*Our popular journals, again, afford us evidence of a much more considerable interest in music generally than was seen even a decade ago. The picture palace orchestra, feeble as it often is in cultural value, is nevertheless a factor in familiarising a great body of people with music of a better type. Of such familiarity everything but contempt is born. But of all the influences conducive to this same familiarity the writer is inclined to rank the gramophone as the most important, although of late broadcasting has sharply challenged the supremacy of the record in this field. There can be no doubt that a large flesh and blood public is waiting at the doors of London's phantom opera-house. This, be it noted, will not be the public which formerly frequented Covent Garden.*

*The patrons of opera of a former age were drawn thither by social convention, and not by innate desire for cultural recreation. It was as much a social obligation to have a box at the opera, and to be seen in it, as it was to keep a yacht, to ride to hounds, or to go to Epsom in a four-in-hand. The opera promoter of another generation concerned himself, then, with the satisfaction of the limited æsthetic requirements of his aristocratic public. With such a public tradition dies hard, and it*

*was because this non-musical (or not particularly musical) and by no means plastic mentality maintained the mode of opera in England that the tyranny of the coloratura and the aria continued in this country and faces us to-day with almost overwhelming obstacles. The public of opera to-day, upon whose suffrage depends not only the financial success of our opera-house, but the development of music-drama as a whole, is not the Rolls-Royce public, but the public of the motor 'bus and "tube." How real and vital is the appreciation of that public may be learned by any one who cares to visit Covent Garden gallery on a Wagner night and observe the passionate and informed attention with which a work is accepted in despite of unconscionable distractions, discomforts and distance from the stage.*

*A careful analysis of the evidence at our disposal seems to show, then, that the opera-producer of the future will have to concentrate his attack and attraction upon the ten million, and not upon the upper ten. And though the problems confronting him do not all arise from a change of the social status of his audience, his first and most important problem will be that of assuring the democracy that he has something worthy their consideration and shillings. To assure them of this, our imaginary producer will have to revolutionise methods of operatic showmanship. He will have to break through that lofty exclusiveness which has typified the advertising and publicity of opera in the past, and vie frankly and openly with the more popular and more efficiently "boomed" wares of music-hall, theatrical and cabaret entertainment. In the writer's experience, it is almost invariably to be noted that the better the show, the worse the showmanship. This is singularly true of the theatre, where a superb indifference to that competitive advertising which, whether we like it or not, is a necessary adjunct of successful showcraft, seems to descend upon those impresarios, the original and un-*

*usual nature of whose presentations is most in need of this extraneous aid in order to compel the stranger to come in from the highways and hedges.*

*In every department of human activity to-day more and more stress is being laid on the value of propaganda. In the realm of the arts such assistance should eagerly be sought, and the informing and encouragement of an audience to visit the opera-house will need to be in the hands of an expert scarcely of less importance to that institution than the art director himself.*

*Having inveigled our democracy into our opera-house, we must be assured that they are accommodated in such a way as to assure adequate comfort and a proper enjoyment of the performance in regard to both acoustics and visibility. This is the problem of bricks and mortar. We have, of course, no opera-house in London worthy of the name, and the provinces are in even a worse case. It may be that our opera promoters will have to put up for many a year with inefficiently equipped and altogether unsuitable buildings, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the comparatively well-equipped theatre and music-hall will in the meantime be exercising a strongly competitive counter-attraction.*

*And here again we meet the sociological change in our audience, for the older type of opera-house is built to accommodate a paying public drawn principally from the stall-holding or box-renting class, whereas the opera-house that is needed to-day is one designed to meet the requirements of a less well-to-do audience. In this respect it has been left to a British musician with a very considerable experience of Continental opera to advocate the establishment in this country of an opera-house, to be built by the subscriptions of the populace at large, for the accommodation of the ordinary man-in-the-street opera-goer, at prices ranging from one to five shillings. Certainly it is only by competing on even terms with other forms of amusement that opera can*

*come to that position in the world of entertainment achievement which is implied for it already in popular favour.*

*Mr. Isidore de Lara's scheme of an imperial opera-house aims at raising one million pounds to build and completely to equip with all modern devices for stage and auditorium a house with a capacity seating of about four thousand. He considers that there are many experts in this province who agree wholeheartedly with him that the major difficulty in the way of a great revival in the popularity of opera in this country is the lack of a suitable building, such building to be obtainable at a suitable rental. Mr. de Lara's scheme, for which already, one gathers, a considerable amount of support is forthcoming, extends beyond mere erection and equipping of an opera-house, for he proposes to raise a second million pounds, which should be invested so as to bring in a subsidy of fifty thousand a year, to insure that experimental and new works could find a place in the repertoire and be given several times, thus providing a fairer test of their appeal than is at present possible in those rare cases when new works are tried out in this country. The provision of a properly designed and equipped opera-house, arranged for our emergent opera public, would probably solve the greatest immediate problem of opera.*

*It would seem, indeed, that the only way to obtain our ideal opera-house—in any case at a reasonable rental—is along the lines either of State or municipal subsidy, private generosity or popular subscription. And of the four the last is probably preferable, since it puts an onus on everybody concerned to see that the house in which he holds shares is a success, and gives to each subscriber that sense of personal responsibility to which too much importance can scarcely be attached. Mr. de Lara's slogan of "One person one pound," if rigidly adhered to, will practically mean that two million people will be informal propagandists scattered throughout the country, and, indeed,*

*throughout the Empire, to advance the cause of the imperial opera-house and its constituent touring companies and provincial sister organisations.*

*But the possession of such a house would also mean that, instead of the majority of income being distributed as rack-rental, the revenue accruing would largely be disbursed in an improved æsthetic* ensemble. *Rack-renting and the abuse of sub-letting have come near to ruin the West End theatre to-day, and the extortionate rentals, which have risen in some cases by three or even five hundred per cent. since* 1914, *have penalised creative endeavour in both theatrical and operatic circles. The prohibitive cost of theatres means that "capacity" business, or something very near to capacity, must be done all the time. Naturally, then, the impresario is compelled to play for safety and sternly to resist any promptings he may have to try out works of the immediate commercial returns of which he has serious doubts.*

*Such an opera-house in London, apart altogether from the maintenance of an efficient artistic and technical personnel, would then be of enormous value to existing operatic organisations, but for the best results to be achieved such a central opera-house would need to have a more or less permanent company of first-class artists, certainly a permanent technical staff and business administration, and presumably a proper organisation for the training and maintenance of a chorus and a ballet. It has been suggested that the development of broadcasting might lead to the formation of a central opera institution where the favoured few could both see and hear, and whence the audible impression could be conveyed to listeners over a wide area. Perhaps as visible broadcasting—now in an experimental stage—advances towards perfection, the Broadcasting Company may have its own opera-house. In any case, the functions of two such institutions, one a house existing purely for the sake of*

*music-drama, the other a by-product of the needs of a specialised public, would be widely different.*

*The above-mentioned may be cited as the problems of* financial *organisation. And although they demand primary consideration by the* entrepreneurs, *it is upon the* artistic *problems that the true future of opera depends.*

*First and foremost among the reforms immediately in demand with regard to the presentation of opera would seem to be the necessity of reviewing the whole production from the point of view of simple common-sense. While we must admit the inevitability of conventions in every sphere of art, the evolution of every art has been marked by a steady breakdown of convention and an attempt to approximate more and more closely to true-seeming. The conventions of the opera-house, on the contrary, seem to have become idolised fetiches, idolised, that is to say, by every one except the common-sensible men or women in the auditorium. It seems to the writer, for example, as absurd to push up a dress-coated conductor, with waving arms and locks, betwixt the long-suffering public and the setting of "Butterfly," as it would be to drag the assistant stage-manager out of his prompt corner and set him down to a meal with Paula Tanqueray during the stage presentation of the Pinero play. The prime necessity, illusion, demands that the conductor should share the prompter's invisibility. In a word, conductors, unlike little boys, should be neither seen nor heard.*

*Unfortunately, however, the opera-house is still the prey of the mind exclusively musical. Ideas which move slowly in the theatre creep at snail pace round the directoral rooms of our opera-houses. At one time it was the aria-singer who tyrannised over music-drama, earning the eloquent and well-aimed anathema of Richard Wagner, a great innovator as regards content, form and technique. To a certain extent this tyranny has been broken down.*

*" The hand of Vengeance sought the bed*
*To which the purple tyrant fled ;*
*The iron hand crushed the tyrant's head,*
*And became a tyrant in his stead."*

*With changing times and changing musical form, nowadays it is the conductor who seeks, without unduly hard work, to be ranked among the " stars."* Ars est celare artem. *And while we are concealing our conductor, let us hide his orchestra out of sight along with him. Their green-lit desks, their waving bows, their fidgety moments of respite, their obvious attentions to their own or their instruments' toilets, provoke anything but the melting mood. The present-day science of applied acoustics makes it an easy matter for the architect to conceal the orchestra under full fathom five of ferro-concrete, if necessary, without sacrifice of tone quality.*

*Wagner, of course, understood very clearly that this necessity of keeping the orchestra out of sight was a primary condition of the maintenance of visual illusion, as is abundantly evident in the architecture of the orchestra-well in the Bayreuth Festspielhaus. But even he dared not assail the supremacy of the singer by demanding the relegation of the twenty-stone tenor or soprano to a like invisibility. Sir Thomas Beecham, whose work as an intelligent director deserves the most eloquent tribute, gave us Russian opera in London mimed by actors who were capable of expressing histrionically more than ponderous singers ordinarily achieve. But even he left the latter in view of the audience. For the complete expression of the æsthetic content of music-drama it will, however, fall to the lot of the future opera-director to subjugate such personal considerations and avoirdupois to the requirements of the composer. And when this has been accomplished we may look forward to a production of " Tristan," perhaps, which does not in any way remind us of an evening at Lord George Sanger's estimable show, and a presentation of " Madame Butterfly " less like a meeting of wrestling cham-*

*pions. This, again, will probably call for modification in the form of our opera-house, since the singers, although not seen, must be heard.*

*At all costs opera must be lifted, as Wagner himself saw and urged fifty and more years ago, above the petty ruck of the merely musical mind. It must be remembered that many musicians actively concerned in the performance of opera to-day are pleased in the fastnesses of their own flats to declare that opera is a bastard art, and that actually only the music matters. How, then, shall we expect that such people, giving us a show which at best they regard only as a concession to our vulgar unimaginativeness, should make of that show a vivid and vital cultural nexus?*

*As a matter of fact, music-drama must be taken out of the control of the irrational music-mind and reduced, so far as its essentials are concerned, to the primal simplicities of illusion and showcraft. If music is sufficient in itself, let the music-mind turn its attention exclusively to the concert-hall. The chief principle of opera is dramaturgy, and not music. For opera and music-drama, in their fullest and freest expression, consist of a composite welding of all the arts, poetry, music, the dance, the scene, mime, and so forth. And the focussing of these diverse elements of the æsthetic spectrum into one all-illuminating centre is a problem for a producer, for a* metteur en scène, *and not for a mere musician. Just as our theatre is starved of vitality by the dictatorship, on the one side, of the purely financial exploiter, and on the other by the star or actor-manager hag-ridden by his or her personality, so opera is nobbled and constrained to-day by the fierce and ineffectual tyranny of the music-mind.*

*Naturally, music-mind will most unwillingly concern itself with such brutal details as the revolving stage, although the* durchcomponiert, *or symphonised opera form, explicitly de-*

*mands such a mechanical aid for the complementing of the audible by the visible illusion. Naturally, again, if it is impossible by means of elaborate stage and lighting mechanism to present a reasonably true-seeming scenic "transformation,"* i.e., *the* Verwandlung *demanded at various points in "Der Ring" and "Parsifal," music-mind will fall into the error of giving us appalling realistic scenery, witless of the fact that, if realism cannot be attained by the utmost elaboration of technical and mechanical equipment of lighting, scenics, and mobility, it is better to rely on abstract and extremely simplified decoration.*

*To compare, once again, with the theatre, one has to choose between the sumptuous and perhaps archæologically exact mounting of a Shakespearean play at His Majesty's or Drury Lane and the equally effective suggestive settings of the Old Vic —settings which probably adhere much more closely to the intention, and certainly to the spirit, of the author.*

*Major Oliver Bernard's simplified settings of "The Ring," designed, the writer understands, principally to meet the British National Opera Company's demands in regard to portability, actually provided a much more efficient background to the Wagnerian masterpieces than many pseudo-realistic settings which have been seen. The notable work of Adolphe Appia in this sphere partakes of a kindred simplicity.*

*To convince our new opera public, we must either give them realism, visual and mechanical, equal to that obtaining in other spheres of the entertainment world, or we must boldly state our claim to their imagination. The ludicrous and futile compromises now existing in the realm of opera production must be boldly jettisoned by our producer. As a focus of all the arts, music-drama will probably demand for its practical embodiment both the realistic and the symbolic-abstract methods for different items in the repertoire, or for different presentation of those items. And here again we are faced by the necessity of a*

*completely equipped modern stage, with revolving floor, cyclorama, elaborate electrical equipment, and all the effects which modern American and continental engineers have perfected for the more complete persuasion of the seat-holder in a modern theatre or opera house.*

*Another question which is raised by any consideration of the production of music-drama in England centres round the maintenance of the necessarily big personnel in such a state of financial security that all singers and players, conductors, and so forth, can devote themselves exclusively to operatic pursuits, and not have to divide their time and energy in undignified skirmishings from opera house to concert hall, here, there, and everywhere. The maintenance of a permanent or semi-permanent organisation of vocalists together with a first-rate band is one of the fundamental necessities, but one does not see how this desideratum can be achieved without some form of subsidy. Our orchestra, for example, must consist of full-time players—that is, of competent musicians working exclusively for and under long-date contracts with the central organisation. Otherwise the appalling inefficiency of the deputy system, a curse of modern orchestral work, will ruin* ensemble *playing.*

*A minor but by no means negligible problem is that of language. Here we are on very controversial ground, and no hard-and-fast lines can usefully be drawn. There seems no reason why the older operas, of which the literary value of the libretto is, in any case, negligible, and wherein that accurate counter-play between music-tone and word-value is not developed, should not be sung in any other as well as their native tongue. Thus the difficulties of translating, say, "The Magic Flute," are largely linguistic, and the same is true of "Cavalleria Rusticana." But he who seeks to Italianise Wotan's* Abschied *or to render Boughton's Fairy Song from "The Immortal Hour" into French is faced with problems musical, linguistic, and race-*

*psychological. Probably the ideal state of affairs in regard to the language problem is to be met when the audience is sufficiently enthusiastic to familiarise itself thoroughly with the ideology of the libretto and to rely upon its memory of this when listening to the performance of the opera in the language of its birth. For, when all's said and done, the most careful translations are a poor substitute for the original, when that original has any literary value whatsoever.*

*Closely allied to the language problem is one of the most vital of all, and the last which the writer proposes to consider. This is the problem of British national opera. The problem, alas! has not been, and is not likely to be, met by that band of well-intentioned enthusiasts and generous supporters of the British National Opera Company. Following the magnificent pioneer work done by that most brilliant of English conductors and original of impresarios, Sir Thomas Beecham, the National Company has endeavoured, in the face of all difficulties, to popularise the musico-dramatic art form. Considering the magnitude of the task, their present achievement is monumental. But, despite their best intentions, native British opera has scarcely received a fillip through their activities. The few native operas that have been produced have been performed a few times only. The establishment of a school of British opera is an altogether sterner task, and although this embryonic work, carried on by the British Company, is of value as an impetus to greater effort, it remains—embryonic. For instance, it does not encourage young composers to turn their attention to operatic form when they know that probably, at best, only a couple of performances—and then oblivion—is the fate to which their months of effort are ultimately destined. In this regard it is interesting to observe that the only modern musical drama which has achieved any financial success for its composer found its eventual market not through musical but through theatrical channels,*

*and that the only other opera composer who has probably made anything like an adequate income out of the actual performance of his works had to find his market abroad. Yet until British opera can be put on to a professional basis, by which it is meant that a composer can prepare a work with a fair hope of its performance and adequate trial really to determine its financial possibilities, it is unlikely that works of the first merit or in considerable numbers will be written.*

H. R. BARBOR.

*Shoreham*, 1925.

# WAGNER'S MUSIC DRAMA OF THE RING

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY STRUGGLES—EXILE—ROYAL PATRONAGE—BAYREUTH FESTIVAL THEATRE

PRIDE of place among the master-works of creative genius of the nineteenth century must unhesitatingly be given to the theatre of Richard Wagner, whose prodigal talent consistently and speedily developed to find its culmination, in the early middle life of the German composer, in the great fourfold drama, "The Ring of the Nibelungs." To come by a clear conception of this tetralogy, its place in Wagner's musico-dramatic life-work, and its relation to the preceding and following schools of opera, it will be necessary at the outset to survey with an almost irreverent brevity the main events and influences of Wagner's life.

In these days when the function of literature seems more governed by the commercial necessity of keeping printing presses active than of formulating new expressions of creative imagination, when countless tomes insist and re-insist on the obvious fact that it is easier to collate and re-edit the incidentalia of the lives and works of the great ones than to emulate their confident mastery, biography has become a garrulous and ubi-

quitous char-lady of letters, and no longer the neat and serviceable handmaid of the writer's art. This char-ladylike mentality has infected numerous biographers who have fallen into their mentor's error of supposing that it is more important to know how these great ones live than what they lived for, that their daily round of inconsiderable behaviour, acquaintance, and the excrescences of their temperament have more significance than the travail of their minds and the accomplishment of their hands. From such error, deliver us!

When we examine the life of any of the giants of human consciousness, we consistently discover woven through the pattern of their daily round some self-created design, triumphing in its verve and sweep over the comparatively inconspicuous if decorative details of everyday. In the case of Wagner, this overbearing purpose establishes itself in obvious definition as a determination to live for and to give a new life to the world-theatre.

Richard Wagner was born at Leipzig on May 22nd, 1813, the son of a police-official, Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Wagner, and his wife, Johanna Rosina. Among his eight brothers and sisters several theatrical and musical associations developed. His favourite sister, Johanna Rosalie, became a well-known actress, Clara Wilhelmina was a talented singer, and his brother Albert was the father of the more famous singer, Johanna Jachmann. When after the death of his father his mother, who had been left in poor circumstances, remarried in 1815, she chose as a step-father for her family Ludwig Geyer, a kindly and charming artist, who won and retained Richard's affection and confidence. Geyer was a portrait-painter of ability as well as a producer and actor

at Dresden, whither the family now repaired, and the influence of his step-father undoubtedly moulded the early inclinations of young Richard. Geyer hoped to make a painter of the boy, but the youngster showed definite musical and theatrical aptitude, upon which his step-father on his death-bed, in 1821, remarked.

The boy lived and moved from his early youth in artistic theatrical and musical circles, and perhaps the first extraneous musical influence on his mind was "Der Freischutz," with whose composer, Weber, personal contact was soon established. Thus operatic music, at its most German, exercised its earliest attraction on Wagner. In the concerts of Dresden he became strongly affected by the works of Beethoven, and about the same time the influence of Shakespearean and Greek drama began to bear strongly upon him. The frank and naïve autobiography ("My Life," by Richard Wagner [Constable]) will serve the reader who seeks a more voluminous account of the story of Wagner's development, and it will be observed how determined he was and how assured in his own consciousness, even at this early period. In fact, almost at the end of his life he seems to have a pride, not indeed untinctured by criticism, of his youthful accomplishments as a poet and dramatist. While still at Dresden, he wrote a drama, strongly affected in regard to its theme and development by the above-mentioned literary influences and also by Goethe's work, and afterwards so much did he neglect his studies at another school at Leipzig for the sake of this drama which he sought to set to music, that his family became highly discouraged and sought by every possible means to dissuade him from adopting a career in any way associated with the theatre. About

this time he wrote an overture which he succeeded in getting performed, but perhaps by virtue of its jejune but definite originality the piece was poorly received, a fate which was not reserved for this work only but for many of his masterpieces.

Lack of appreciation, however, did not conduce to a more conventional and scholarly way of life, for the young student threw himself into the gaiety and debaucheries not uncommon to his fellows. Thereafter he became associated in the political life of his companions, and he seems to have thrown himself with equal zest into both the revolutionary and reactionary activities of the time. The student *oisiveté*, extravagance, and vices, were not, however, the only distinguishing feature of his university life at Leipzig, for he came here under the influence of Professor Weinlig, and as a result of this interested himself in the work of Mozart. He wrote a sonata and polonaise which was published by the firm of Breitkopf. In 1832 he visited Vienna and Prague, and composed several works, among them being a symphony and the beginning of an opera, "Das Hochzeit." The latter piece was heavily influenced by the French school of musical composition which then obsessed Vienna and Prague, and it so strongly displeased his sister Rosalie that he destroyed it in the following year.

When, thanks to his brother Albert, who was a singer at the local theatre, Wagner became Kapellmeister at Würzburg, he next composed a work, "Die Feen," which musically derives from Beethoven and Weber. Two years later he commenced an adaptation of Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure," called "The Novice of Palermo," but better known as "Liebesverbot," which

was given one performance. Perpetually harassed by financial worries, he visited Berlin, "that pretentious royal capital," in 1836, afterwards obtaining a post as conductor at Königsberg. Lonely and unhappy, he had formed an attachment to an actress, Minna Planer, who was largely responsible for obtaining this new post for him. It may be said that Wagner's marriage to Minna, who had indeed been a good Samaritan to him although she seems to have been entirely unsuited to the emergent genius, was dictated out of regard for the theatre. For, as Muhler remarked, it was absolutely necessary for us to get married and to have a due celebration of the event; there was no getting out of it," Wagner comments in his autobiography And again: "I had become sufficiently intimate with Minna's life and character to realise the wide difference between our two natures as fully as the important step I was about to take necessitated; but my powers of judgment were not yet sufficiently matured." He was married on November 24th, 1836, at the age of twenty-three.

There followed an engagement as musical director of the Riga theatre, and Wagner continued to compose, but his first considerable work in the form in which he was to achieve unexcelled distinction was the opera, "Rienzi," of which he finished the first two acts in 1839. "Already in my conception of 'Rienzi,'" Wagner confesses, "I had dreamed of the most magnificent theatrical conditions, but now, without halting at any intermediate stations, my one desire was to reach the very heart of European grand opera."

He had made preliminary attempts to open up negotiations with various authorities of the operatic world

of Paris, whither he now set out in the summer of that year in the company of his wife and his Newfoundland dog, Robber.

Owing to passport difficulties, they decided to journey by boat *via* London, but a great storm overtook the little vessel and considerably delayed their passage. The ill wind, however, blew to Wagner's good, for out of that storm was born the idea which was destined to take shape as "The Flying Dutchman."

"We entered one of those long sea-roads running through a giant ravine, for such the Norwegian fiords appeared to me," the composer writes. "A feeling of indescribable content came over me when the enormous granite walls echoed the hail of the crew as they cast anchor and furled the sails. The sharp rhythm of this call clung to me like an omen of good cheer, and shaped itself presently into the theme of the seamen's song in 'Der Fliegende Holländer.' The idea of this opera was, even at that time, ever present in my mind, and it now took on a definite poetic and musical colour under the influence of my recent impressions."

After a most adventurous journey of three weeks' duration they arrived in London and made their "plans for the conquest of this giant metropolis." He gave up this ambition, perforce, and went to France, where he was kindly received by Meyerbeer, who gave him several letters of introduction. These, however, failed to relieve Wagner's precarious circumstances. After six months of fruitless work, it was proposed to present "Liebesverbot" at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, but these plans fell through. At the end of his resources and in very real misery, he undertook hack-work, which was ultimately declared unplayable, and even sought, though he had no voice, to obtain work as a chorister. His setting of "The Two Grenadiers" made a little money, however, and he wrote the "Faust" overture at this time, when he also reapplied himself to

" Rienzi." In 1840 he sketched out the poem of " The Flying Dutchman." Leon Pillet, the director of the Opéra to whom he sent it, offered to buy the idea in order that another composer might handle it. Wagner refused this, and managed to keep himself alive by articles in the musical press and by arrangements of popular works for the piano.

In his struggle with poverty he was eventually compelled to sell the rights of his story for five hundred francs, with which he went to Meudon, and began to work on the opera with a German theatre in view. The piece was accepted finally by the Berlin Theatre Royal, but was not presented until 1844. In the spring of 1842, however, he returned to Germany, and in the autumn " Rienzi " was put on at Dresden with Wagner's great friend and inspiration, Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, and Tichatschek in the leading *rôles*. The piece was an enormous success, the house being crowded for three performances.

" The Flying Dutchman " was produced during the next year with Madame Schröder-Devrient as Senta, but between " Rienzi " and " The Flying Dutchman " there is, musically considered, a wide gulf, and the emergent Wagnerian technique noticeable so definitely in the latter and only vaguely hinted at in the former opera, was new and strange. The piece was a failure in Dresden, although it was afterwards presented successfully elsewhere, including Berlin.

Owing to his successful conducting of " Rienzi," Wagner obtained the position of Hofkapellmeister at Dresden, which lifted him from the immediate stress of poverty. He held this post for seven years, during which time he directed many operas and other works,

including Beethoven's Symphonies. At this time he wrote a cantata, and set to work on "Tannhäuser." While in France he had been affected by the writings of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the minnesinger, from whose writings Wagner prepared the poems of "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin," and the first sketch of "Tannhäuser" was finished in 1845. It was presented at Dresden with the same distinguished singers in the leading *rôles*, with Johanna Wagner as the Elizabeth, but it was poorly received, and its failure was a great blow to the composer, more especially as prominent musical acquaintances disliked the piece. The publication of "Rienzi," "The Flying Dutchman," and "Tannhäuser," led to further financial complications. His disappointment brought him into further trouble, and caused him to sacrifice many friendships. He completed "Lohengrin," knowing full well that the work was against the current of public taste, and thereafter turned his attention to the discovery of new subjects for musico-dramatic treatment. Among these were one on the Christ story and one on the emperor Barbarossa, but he relinquished these in favour of a treatment of the Siegfried story, to which he had been attracted when reading the old German poem, the "Nibelungenlied." To this preoccupation with mythological subjects return will be made later.

All the while that Wagner was engaged on the various compositions, he had, of course, to carry on his duties for the state. Every principality in Germany had at this time its capital, each with a definite sub-metropolitan culture, centring round the Court. Between these a certain rivalry existed. This decentralised cultural life of Germany, so different in its effect on

national culture and the encouragement of provincial art and artists from the more centralised conditions obtaining in England and France, had a very definite bearing on the development of the German theatre during the nineteenth century, and, of course, upon its contemporary evolution. The patronage of the Court, which first led to freeing Wagner of immediate financial worry and giving him the opportunity of leisure in which to engage in creative work, and subsequently the royal patronage of the Bavarian monarch, which enabled his more developed genius to come to full flower, proved indeed the decisive factors in his artistic career.

He was soon, however, to sacrifice the favour of princes and to ally himself with the revolutionary politics of his time, and owing to these excursions he joined Liszt at Weimar. Of these events, Wagner himself tells at some length in his biography, and the influence of August Roeckel and Bakunin was largely responsible for Wagner's reabsorption into political enthusiasm.

"Now that I had finished my 'Lohengrin,'" he writes, "and had leisure to study the course of events, I could no longer help myself sympathising with the ferment aroused by the birth of German ideals and the hopes attached to their realisation. . . . The temper of the populace . . . could not fail to exercise its influence upon me, but I wanted actions instead of words, and actions which would force our princes to break for ever with their old traditions, which were so detrimental to the cause of the German commonweal."

He indulged in both journalistic and oratorical propaganda, and, after a violent speech denouncing in particular the Court officials which was followed by inevitable repercussions in his official life, he wisely decided to leave Dresden, to which, however, he

returned to take a practical part in the revolutionary movement. After the failure of the *coup d'état* organised by Bakunin and the rest, he retired to Weimar, where he again met his old and true friend Liszt, through whose assistance he was enabled to leave Germany for Switzerland by subterfuge.

Thus began the twelve-year exile from his beloved native land of her greatest creative artist. Failing to obtain a hearing in Paris, whither he had originally repaired, he settled in Zurich in the summer of 1849 among a circle of his fellow-refugees. His wife, Minna, rejoined him here, and in the friendly atmosphere of the Swiss town, among congenial spirits, he devoted himself to his literary and musical pursuits, which, during this period, were to find their fullest and most abounding expression. It must not be overlooked that in addition to his work as a musical director, as dramatic author and composer, Wagner has also bequeathed to posterity a number of volumes of prose work, which might well be the monument to a life of industry for a man of less prodigal resource and self-expenditure. Shortly after his settlement in Zurich he sought to focus his æsthetic and sociological theories in his writings, and " Art and Revolution " and " The Art-work of the Future " are the fruit of this intention. Soon after he published his bitter diatribe, " Judaism in Music," and he also wrote an opera, " Wieland the Smith," intended for the Opéra. It was refused, to his great disappointment.

During 1850, however, " Lohengrin " was produced with tremendous success by Liszt at Weimar, and once and for all established Wagner's fame in Germany. Free of the need of working explicitly for money's sake,

he now turned once more to the Nibelung myth, which he seems to have realised for some time was to be the crowning achievement of his life. He worked at this until 1857, by which time he had finished the first two acts of Siegfried, after which he left the tetralogy untouched for many years, in order to turn his attention to "Tristan." Meantime, in 1855, he had returned to London to conduct for the Philharmonic Society, but the expedition disappointed him, although he won high favour from the Prince Consort. He failed to get permission to return to Baden, where it was proposed to present "Tristan," and was again rejected by Paris, although the favour of princes was once more accorded to him, this time by Napoleon the Third.

In 1861 his long exile ended, and he returned to Germany full of desire to present "Tristan." But this was impossible. "Die Meistersinger" was finished in 1863, and he applied himself zealously to the giving of concerts in various parts of Europe. The friendship which was to change the whole tenour of his life began on May 4th, 1864, when Wagner was presented to the king, Ludwig II. of Bavaria. The king had sent his private secretary to Wagner.

"He was charged with a note for me from the young king of Bavaria, together with a portrait and a ring as a present. In words which, though few, penetrated to the very core of my being, the young monarch confessed his great partiality for my work, and announced his firm resolve to keep me near him as his friend, so that I might escape any malignant stroke of fate. . . . On the same day I had received the most urgent warnings against returning to Vienna. But my life was to have no more of these alarms; the dangerous road along which fate beckoned me to such great ends was not destined to be clear of troubles of a kind unknown to me heretofore, but I was never again to feel the weight of the every-day hardships of existence under the protection of my exalted friend."

Ludwig II. was well versed in Wagner's writings before they met, and sought first of all to make it possible for the composer to complete "The Ring" in order that it should be produced. Wagner became a naturalised Bavarian and expressed his gratitude to Ludwig in the form of a military march ("Huldigungsmarsch"). The path of the friendship between the king and the master was none too smooth, for there was naturally considerable enmity aroused among the Court officials, who indeed later formed a veritable cabal against Wagner. Meantime sundry works were presented under the royal patronage, and a superb performance of "Tristan," with Schnorr in the title *rôle*, was given in 1865.

Wagner found it advisable to leave Munich, although the closest friendship continued between him and his royal patron. During his absence, besides literary work, he finished "Die Meistersinger," which was given at Munich in 1868, and then completed "The Ring." His wife, Minna, had died in 1865, and in 1870 Wagner married Cosima von Bülow, the daughter of his friend Liszt. The story of this great love-match is familiar enough to render repetition here unnecessary, but the great share of Cosima Wagner in Wagner's eventual triumph, and her carrying out of his practical ideas at Bayreuth after his death, must be stressed. To Frau Wagner must be ascribed no small share in the establishment and maintenance of the Wagnerian cult in Germany and throughout the world, and her resolute and tireless activity, alike with her understanding comradeship, has proved of incalculable worth to her husband, to his memory, and to music-lovers in five continents. The next year Wagner's son Siegfried was

born, the occasion being marked by a family gathering at which a performance of the Siegfried Idyll, specially composed by Wagner and employing several of the Siegfried *leit-motifs*, was given in the gardens of the house at Tribschen under the baton of Hans Richter.

An inadequate performance of "Rheingold," which Ludwig caused to be presented, despite insurmountable difficulties of *mise-en-scène*, was poorly received, but the following year a better reception greeted the presentation of "Die Walküre." These ineffective performances only served to whet the determination of king and composer to achieve their desire for a suitable embodiment of Wagner's master-work, and the latter made a tour in order to find a suitable *locale* for the festival theatre which it was decided to erect. During the years which followed, Wagner was occupied largely with the affairs of this theatre and with the production of his own works elsewhere. In 1876 "Tristan" was enthusiastically received at Berlin, and in the following year Wagner and Richter conquered London with performances of several of Wagner's works. Two years later, "Parsifal" was completed, but the scoring was delayed until 1882, when it was performed at the Bayreuth Theatre.

Throughout his life, Wagner had been troubled by persistently recurring attacks of erysipelas, which, as he grew older, was aggravated and compelled him to winter in Italy. It was in a palace on the Grand Canal at Venice that, after playing and singing the first scene of "Rheingold," he was stricken with a sudden mortal attack on the 13th February, 1883. To the strains of "Siegfried's Funeral March" from "Götterdämmerung," the body, which had been taken with great pomp to Bayreuth, was borne to its last resting-place in the

gardens of the Villa Wahnfried a short journey from the Festival Theatre.

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With that amazing comprehensiveness which typifies the mental reaction of the master in all the varied activities of his life, Wagner was never content to make shift with the means already at his disposal. His ability as litterateur and composer was equalled by his extraordinary grasp and grit in regard to organisation. While engaged as Hofkapellmeister at Dresden, he elaborated a scheme for the complete re-orientation and development of the cultural life of Saxony. He saw the theatre as the meeting-place of all the arts, the crowning glory and mirror of the life of the State. His intensely practical mind conceived how the various cultural organisations could all be brought to a centre of complete expression in a State theatre. Later he suggested a similar organisation for Switzerland. A like scheme was later adumbrated for the Bavarian capital, but his own enthusiasm and that of his king and friend did not suffice to bring this to fruition.

When it was eventually decided to build a theatre for the production of "The Ring," the king wished this to be situated in Munich, and Gottfried Semper had designed by the king's wish and with Wagner's co-operation a suitable theatre. But Wagner was dissatisfied with Munich, and after a tour of the country decided upon Bayreuth as the ideal centre. It was realised by Wagner, however, that the royal purse was not sufficiently deep, and the various Wagner societies which had already sprung up were canvassed in order that a list of subscriber-founders might be drawn up for three performances of the tetralogy. It was concluded

that the cost would be £45,000, and it was proposed that this cost should be met by one thousand shares of £45 each, which would entitle the holder to seats at the three cycles, each share being, of course, divisible into three *abonnements* for the complete work. An administrative council undertook the raising of the necessary funds and the encouragement and formation of other Wagnerian societies throughout the world, with the single aim in view of presenting the tetralogy three times. As soon as a third of the money was in hand the foundation-stone of the theatre was laid by Wagner on his sixty-ninth birthday.

To raise further funds Wagner vigorously undertook the direction of concerts in Germany, Hungary and Austria, and even at the Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876, the expenditure being ultimately made up by the generosity of Wagner's kingly patron, a further sum being raised by the unexpected method of permitting the public to be present at the final rehearsals. The first cycle was presented from the 13th to the 16th of August, 1876, the second from the 20th to the 23rd, and the third from the 27th to the 30th, each commencing on a Sunday, a tradition which was afterwards followed at the Festspielhaus. In spite of the tremendous artistic success, there was a deficit of over £7,000. The theatre was not opened again until 1882, during which and the following year "Parsifal" was presented there.

The theatre, with its fan-shaped auditorium containing over 1,300 seats, with no gallery, but with boxes at the back, expresses many of Wagner's admirable ideas of theatrical architecture. The orchestra is situated in a deep well, which completely hides it from the public,

the stage being larger than the auditorium itself, with sufficient fly-room and cellarage to permit of whole scenes being raised or lowered out of sight of the audience. It is situated on a hill above the town overlooking country of singular beauty, a fitting monument to the toil and fame of its only begetter.

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## CHAPTER II

MYTH-HISTORY AND "THE RING"—WELFS AND NIBELUNGS—CHARLEMAGNE TO BARBAROSSA—HOARD AND GRAIL—DATES OF COMPOSITION.

TOWARDS the end of the first half of the century, as has been already stated, Wagner's mind was actively concerned with German national and political aspirations. With that universality which distinguishes his mind, social and political reactions linked themselves inevitably with the theatric art which was the determinant of that mind. While his imagination was busily intrigued with thoughts of a new social order and of a new æsthetic currency, the germ of ideas which were to find eventual fulfilment in "The Ring" was first evolved. He sketched out a five-act drama in which the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa was hero, but he relates:

"I lost all interest, however, in the carrying out of this dramatic scheme directly I discovered its resemblance to the subject-matter of the Nibelungen and Siegfried myths, which possessed a more powerful attraction for me."

The resemblance in question is fully worked out in a treatise entitled "Die Wibelungen" with the subtitle "World History as Told in Saga," which Wagner wrote in the summer of 1848, and this treatise, with its deep researches into folk-myth, mediæval history, and the association of pagan with Christian ethics, is so

germane to a comprehension of the philosophical and sociological foundations of the completed "Ring" tetralogy that it seems advisable to quote considerably from it at the present juncture. These quotations form the barest skeleton of Wagner's own treatise, for the complete English rendering of which readers are referred to W. Ashton Ellis's translation of the "Prose Works," published by Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.

"The ceaseless strain of men and races towards never-compassed goals will mostly find a clearer explanation in their Ur- and Stem-sagas than can be gathered from their entrance into naked History, which tells us but the consequences of their essential attributes. If we read the Stem-saga of the Frankish royal race aright, we find therein an explanation of its historic deeds past anything obtainable on other paths of scrutiny. . . .

"Now the Franks, whom we first meet in history in the region of the Lower Rhine, have a royal race in which appears the name 'Nibelung'; especially among its purest scions, who even before the time of Chlodwig were ousted by a kinsman, Merwig (fifth century), but regained the kingship later as Pipigen or Karlingen (Pepins or Carlovingians). Let this suffice, for the present, to show, if not the genealogic, at least the mythical identity of the Frankish royal family with those Nibelungen of the saga; which has adopted unmistakable features from the history of this stem into its later, more historical development, where the focus still remains possession of that Hoard, the cynosure of earthly rule. . . .

"Bare history scarcely ever offers us, and always incompletely, the material for a judgment of the inmost (so to say, instinctive) motives of the ceaseless struggles of whole folks and races; that we must seek in Religion and Saga, where we mostly shall find it in convincing clearness.

"Religion and Saga are the pregnant products of the people's insight into the nature of things and men. . . . The Gods and Heroes of its religion and saga are the concrete personalities in which the spirit of the Folk portrays its essence to itself . . . as every new direction of the people's nature can be gradually imparted to them, they are always in the mood to suit it. Hence the Folk is thoroughly sincere and truthful in its stories and inventions, whereas the learned historian . . . is pedantically untrue because unable to understand the very subject of his work with mind and heart. . . .

"If—to prove the truthfulness of the people's insight with reference to our present case—instead of a history of lords and princes we had a Folk-history, we certainly should also find there how the German peoples always knew a name for that wondrous Frankish race of Kings which filled them all with awe and reverence of a higher type, a name we find again in history at last, Italianly disguised as 'Ghibeline.' That this name applied not only to the Hohenstaufen in Italy but also to their forerunners in Germany, the Frankish Kaisers, is historically attested by Otto von Freisingen: the current form of this name in the Upper Germany of his time was 'Wibelingen' or 'Wibelungen.' Now this title would entirely conform with the name of the chief heroes of the ur-Frank stem-saga, as also with the demonstrably frequent family-name among the Franks, of Nibeling, if the change of the initial N to W could be accounted for. The linguistic difficulty here is met with ease, if we rightly weigh the origin of just that consonantal change; this lay in the people's mouth, which, following the German idiom's native bent, made a Stabreim of the opposing parties, Welfs and Nibelungs, and gave the preference to the party of the German folk-stems by placing first the name of the 'Welfen' and making that of the foes of their independence come after it as rhyme . . . 'Welfen und Wibelungen.' . . . The Italian people, likewise standing nearer to the Welfs in their feuds against the Kaisers, adopted these names from the German folk-mouth, and turned them quite according to their dialect to 'Guelphi' and 'Ghibelini.' . . .

"In the German language 'Welfe' means sucklings, at first of dogs, and then of quadrupeds in general. The notion of pure descent and nurture at the mother's breast was easily conjoined to this, and in the poetic people's-mouth a 'whelp' would soon be tantamount to a pure-bred son, born and suckled by the lawful mother. In the times of the Karlingen, at its ancient Swabian stem-seat there enters history a race in which the name of *Welf* is handed down to farthest generations. It is a Welf who first arrests the eye of History by declining to accept enfeoffments from Frankish kings. . . . This incident, whose like may often have occurred before, expressed with energy the proud yet suffering self-consciousness of all the German stems as against the ruling tribe. Welf may thus have been acclaimed a 'true whelp,' a genuine son of the genuine stem-mother; and, with the constantly increasing wealth and honour of his race, it might easily end in the people's viewing the name *Welf* as synonymous with German tribal independence against the feared but ne'er-beloved Frankish sovereignty. . . .

"Repeatedly did the possession of the major part of Germany

devolve on the Welfen, and though his Wibelung predecessors had deemed expedient to withdraw it from them, Friedrich I. appears to have seen in the recognition of such an estate itself the surest means of reconcilement with an invincible National party and lastingly laying the hatred of ages ; . . .

" What part is to be ascribed to the Welfs in the final foundering of the Wibelingen, and with them of the stricter German monarchy, is plainly told in history : the latter half of the thirteenth century shews us the fulfilled reaction of the narrower national spirit of the German stems, in their thirst for independence, against the royal yoke originally imposed upon all by the Franks."

Wagner next comments on a probable democratic devolution of the Frankish peoples into independent *Gaue* (districts), with rulers from the Ur-stem.

" In ' Nibelgau ' we see established the undoubtedly oldest and most genuine section of the race: Chlojo or Chlodio, may be regarded as the earliest historic holder of the strictly royal authority, *i.e.*, the Hoard of the Nibelungen. Victoriously had the Franks invaded the Roman world already, dwelt under the name of Confederates in the former Roman Belgia, and Chlojo ruled a subject province with something very like a proconsul's power. Very probably a decisive battle with Roman legions had preceded this final seizure, and in the spoil there may have been found, beyond the war-chest, the full insignia of the Roman Empire. In these treasures, these insignia, the stem-saga of the Nibelungen-hoard would reap new realistic matter for its freshening, and renew alike its ideal import by the increase to the royal stability of the old stem-ruling race. The previously divided royal authority thus won a sure combining-point, material and ideal at once, against which the licence of the degenerate tribal system broke in vain."

This Hoard became the centre of dynastic conflict, the chief of the Merwigau (Merovingians) seizing it, so that it passed from the Nibelungs to Siegfried the Merwing.

" One of the sons of Chlojo was saved, however ; his descendants fled to Austrasia, regained the Nibelgau, established themselves at Nivella, and finally reappeared in history as the ' Pipingen.' . . . For these it was reserved, after recovery of the Nibelungen-hoard, to raise the material value of the worldly power upbuilt thereon to its uttermost pitch : Karl the Great, whose predecessor had entirely set aside at last the puffed-up and de-

generate race of the Merwingen, gained and governed the whole German world, together with the former West-Roman Empire so far as German peoples dwelt therein; he accordingly might deem himself *de facto* successor to the rights of the Roman Cæsars, and claim their confirmation by the Roman Pontiff. . . .

"When Karl the Great looked down from the height of his West-Roman Kaiser-throne upon the world he knew, the first thing to strike him must have been that solely in himself and family had the German ur-kingship survived. . . ."

This claim to kingship by divine right is insisted upon in the saga by correlative religio-mythological implications, which are next examined by Wagner.

"Man receives his first impressions from surrounding Nature, and none of her phenomena will have reacted on him so forcibly from the beginning as that which seemed to him to form the first condition of the existence, or at least of his knowledge, of everything contained in Creation; and this is Light, the Day, the Sun. Thanks, and finally worship, would be paid this element the first; the more so as its opposite, Darkness, Night, seemed joyless, hence unfriendly and fear-compelling. Now, as man drew all his joy and animation from the light, it soon would come to mean the very fount of Being: it became the begetter, the father, the god; the breaking of day out of night at last appeared to him the victory of Light over Darkness, of Warmth over Cold, and so forth; and this idea may have been the first to breed in man a moral consciousness and lead him to distinction of the useful and the harmful, the friendly and hostile, Good and Bad. . . .

"At the farthest point to which we can trace it, the Frank stem-saga shows the individualised Light or Sun-god, who conquers and lays low the monster of ur-Chaotic night:—this is the original meaning of Siegfried's fight with the Dragon, a fight like that Apollo fought against the dragon Python. Yet, as Day succumbs to Night again, as Summer in the end must yield to Winter, Siegfried, too, is slain at last: so the god became man, and as a mortal man he fills our soul with fresh and stronger sympathy; for, a sacrifice to his deed of blessing us, he wakes the moral motive of revenge, *i.e.*, the longing to avenge his death upon his murderer and thus renew his deed. The ur-old fight is now continued by ourselves, and its changeful issue is just the same as that eternal alternation of day and night, summer and winter—and lastly of the human race, itself in ceaseless sway from life to death, from triumph to defeat, from joy to grief, and thus perennially rejuvenating in itself the active consciousness of the immortal fund

of Man and Nature. The quintessence of this constant motion, thus of Life, at last in 'Wuotan' (Zeus) found expression as the chiefest God. . . .

"In the religious myths of the Scandinavians the term Nifelheim, *i.e.*, Nibel = Nebelheim (the Home of Haze), comes down to us as designation of the (subterranean) sojourn of the Night-spirits, 'Schwartzalben,' in opposition to the heavenly dwelling of the 'Asen' and 'Lichtalben' ('Light-Elves'). These Black-elves, 'Niflungar,' children of Night and Death, burrow the earth, find out its inner treasures, smelt and smith its ore; golden gear and keen-edged weapons are their work. Now we find the name of 'Nibelungen,' their treasures, arms and trinkets, again in the Frankish stem-saga, but with the distinction that the idea originally shared by all the German stems has here evolved to ethical historic import.

"When Light vanquished Darkness, when Siegfried slew the Nibelungen-dragon, he further won as victor's spoil the Nibelungen-hoard it guarded. But the possession of this Hoard—whose properties increase his might beyond all measure, since he thereby rules the Nibelungen—is also reason of his death: for the dragon's heir now plots to win it back. This heir despatches him by stealth, as night the day, and drags him down into the gloomy realm of Death: Siegfried thus becomes himself a Nibelung. Though doomed to death by acquisition of the Hoard, each sequent generation strives to seize it: its inmost essence drives it on, as with necessity of Nature, as day has ever to dethrone the night anew. For in the Hoard there lies withal the secret of all earthly might: it is the earth itself with all its splendour, which in joyous shining of the Sun at dawn of day we recognise as our possession to enjoy, when Night, that held its ghostly, gloomy dragon's-wings spread fearsomely above the world's rich stores, has finally been routed.

"If we look closer at this Hoard, the Nibelungen's special work, in it we recognise at first the metal bowels of the earth, and next what is prepared therefrom: arms, ruler's-ring, and stores of gold.

"Karl the Great knew perfectly what he was doing and why, when he had all the songs of the stem-saga most carefully collected and transcribed; he knew they would confirm the folk-belief in the ur-old right of his dynasty. . . ."

Wagner now returns to a consideration of the Germanic monarchy in its relation to the Roman Cæsardom.

". . . The sovereign instinct of the Nibelungen, till then more brutal in its satisfaction, was led at last by Karl the Great (Charle-

magne) towards an ideal aim : this psychologic moment must be sought in Karl's assumption of the Roman Cæsardom. . . .

" Already German warriors had hunted Gauls and Celts, with hardly a stand, over the Alps and across the Rhine ; the conquest of the whole of Gallia was easily within their grasp, when suddenly in Julius Cæsar they encountered a force unknown to them before. Beating them back, vanquishing and partly subjugating them, this supernal captain must have made an indelible impression on the Germans ; and confirmed was their deep awe of him when they later learnt how all the Roman world had bent to him, how his patronymic, ' Cæsar,' had been hallowed to the title of the highest earthly might, whilst he himself had been translated to the gods from whom his race had sprung. This divine descent was grounded on an ur-old Roman saga, according to which the Romans had issued from a primordial race. . . ."

The author proceeds to show how the Roman race, too, had its ur-kingship with its own hoard equivalent, the sacra, in the keeping of the patrician families, and shows how, with the development of imperialism, the original religious folk-centre became disintegrated, and material usurped the function of spiritual power, the Pontificate passing over to the Imperator.

" The first man to combine both powers was just that Julius Cæsar, whose race was lauded as the very oldest emigrant from Asia. Troja (Ilion), so said the old stem-saga, now ripened to historic consciousness, was that sacred town of Asia whence the Julian (Ilian) race had sprung : during the destruction of his father-town by the united Hellenic stems, Æneas, son of a goddess, had rescued the holiest relic (the Palladium), preserved in this ur-people's city, and brought it safe to Italy : from him descend the primal Roman races, and most directly of them all, the Julian ; from him, through the possession of that ur-folk halidom, was said to date the core of Romandom, their old religion. . . ."

Wagner shows how the Franks sought to claim their own stem-descent from Troy, as a folk-implication of their right to rule over the Roman world, and he shows the common origin of Pharamond and Priamus, of Asgard (Asciburg) and Olympus and the Roman

capital. He sees Asgard, the ur-town of the Germans, as a remembered mother-city whence they had originally migrated, and shows how, as the Romans had adopted the Hellenic ur-town, so the Franks endeavoured to claim a like right in the Roman mother-city.

"If the German memories were less distinct, at least they were still older, for they clung directly to the earliest home, the burg (Etzel-, *i.e.*, Asci- burg) in which was stored the Nibelungen hoard, once won by their Stem-god and left to them and their strong arm; thus the burg whence they had once already ruled all kindred folks and races. The Grecian Troy became for them that cradle city, and the King of immemorial right, dislodged therefrom, in them revived his ancient privilege. . . ."

With the decline of the Frankish peoples after the death of Charlemagne, the idea of the Kaiserdom became the symbol of possession of the hoard, *i.e.*, the wealth and property which had sadly diminished. As the kingship lost its material aspect, however, the Church had attained to worldly possessions, and in the end Kaiser and Pope became co-partners. Now in the old ur-father, temporal and spiritual power had been united, and in the Germanic myths the king partakes of the dual function, spiritual and worldly. Thus:

"The abstract highest god of the Germans, Wuotan, did not really need to yield place to the god of the Christians; rather could he be completely identified with him. . . . The universal attributes ascribed to him for the rest completely answered those allotted to the Christians' god. And Christianity has been unable to our day to extirpate the elementary or local nature-gods. . . . Christianity, therefore, with their incomplete and physical understanding of it, would rather strengthen the Franks in their national faith, particularly against the Roman Church, than make them falter; and in rejoinder to this vital obstinacy of the Wibelingian superstition, we see the natural instinct of the Church attacking with an almost mortal dread this last but sturdiest survival of paganism in the deeply-hated race. . . ."

There follows a historic study of the struggle between

Kaiser and Pope for the empery of Christendom, and Wagner indicates how in Friedrich I.'s desire for all-embracing Kaiserdom with the Pope as his chief officer (whose duty it was to express to his lord the will of God in order that the Kaiser might make this will manifest), the complete idealisation of the Nibelungen hoard is witnessed. This Kaiserdom enfeoffed all lordship to its dependent officers, spiritual and temporal, and is the fullest expression of the divine right of kingship.

Friedrich's effort to assert his world-supremacy, his victorious struggle with the Church, and his unsuccessful attempts at the subjugation of the Lombard communes (over whom he eventually triumphed by pronouncing them free and allying himself with them), are next dealt with by Wagner, who goes on to demonstrate the ascension of the hoard idea into the Grail idea—a historico-mythological phenomenon of extreme interest when taken in conjunction with Wagner's own musico-dramatic composition. In this we find a continuity of conception between the dramas of "The Ring" and the three dramas of the Grail, "Lohengrin," "Tannhäuser," and "Parsifal." For Wagner shows how, gathering his whole feudatory round him at Mainz and finding himself endowed with Kaiser-might, Barbarossa heard the call to rescue the holy tomb, marched through Greece, and broke the Saracen power.

"Unresting he was drawn to farthest Asia. There on tempestuous field he broke the power of the Saracens; unchallenged lay the promised land before him; he could not wait for the construction of a flying bridge, but urged impatient Eastward,—on horse he plunged into the stream: none saw him in this life again.

"Since then the legend went that once the keeper of the Grail had really brought the holy relic to the Occident; great wonders had he here performed: in the Netherlands, the Nibelungen's ancient seat, a Knight of the Holy Grail had appeared, but

vanished when asked forbidden tidings of his origin ;—then was the Grail conducted back to its old guardian in the distant morning-land ; in a castle on a lofty mount in India it now was kept once more.

" In truth the legend of the Holy Grail, significantly enough, makes its entry on the world at the very time when the Kaiserhood attained its more ideal direction, and the Nibelungs' hoard accordingly was losing more and more in material worth, to yield to a higher spiritual content. The spiritual ascension of the Hoard into the Grail was accomplished in the German conscience, and the Grail, at least in the meaning lent to it by the German poets, must rank as the ideal representative or follower of the Nibelung hoard."

Thus Wagner sees the master of chivalry found in the idealised Kaiser, and, moreover, recognises that the Grail, the new substitute for the hoard, represents that reaching-out of human consciousness to the Redeemer's tomb and beyond it to that morning-land of the ur-folk, Asia, which, lost so far as the bald accuracies of history are concerned, yet lives eternally as memory and aspiration in the folk-mind and its poetry.

" The ' poor Folk ' sang, read, and printed in time, the Nibelungenlieder," his thesis concludes, " its only keepsake from the Hoard belief in it never wavered ; only, one knew it was no longer in the world—for it had been sunk into an old God's-hill again, a cave like that whence Siegfried once had won it from the Nibelungen. The great Kaiser himself had brought it back to that hill, to save it up for better times. There in the Kyffhäuser he sits, the old ' Redbeard Friedrich,' all round him the treasures of the Nibelungen, by his side the sharp sword that one-time slew the dreaded Dragon."

In making this brief extract of the story of Guelph (Welfen) and Ghibelline (Wibelung) as exhaustively studied by Wagner, we have omitted all such material as did not seem directly contributory to his subsequent dramatic composition, but the bearing of the foregoing upon the story of Wotan (Wälse, the Wolf) and Siegfried the Wälsung (Wulfing, the Wolf-cub) will be evident.

The same summer of 1848 Wagner roughed out a sketch for a drama entitled " The Nibelungen Myth," for his always intense nationalism appears now to have centred in some constructive study on the formation of the German people. At first he intended to write only one drama under the title " Siegfried's Tod," which eventually became " Götterdämmerung." But to introduce this, he was led to write " The Young Siegfried," which became afterwards " Siegfried." Thereafter he composed the poem of " Die Walküre," and last of all the introduction, " Das Rheingold." The poems were finished in 1852. In the following year, while staying at Spezia, during a night of insomnia the idea of the music obsessed him. He hastened to leave Italy, feeling that the atmosphere of this Latin country was alien to his conception, and returning to Zurich began work on the musical development of the myth.

" For five and a half years (since the end of March, 1848), I had held aloof from all musical composition," he states in his autobiography. " This return to my work can best be compared to a reincarnation of my soul after it had been wandering in other spheres."

He completed the outline of the composition on the 16th of January, 1854. The scoring was accomplished soon after, and that of " Die Walküre " in the winter of 1854 and 1855. In 1857 the first two acts of " Siegfried " were composed, and subsequently occurred that long break to which previous reference has been made. It was not until 1869 that " Siegfried " was completed, and in the following year he composed the first act of " Götterdämmerung," but the final work on this tremendous drama was not finished till four years later, when, in 1874, " The Ring " was completed.

## CHAPTER III

WAGNER AS MAN OF THE THEATRE — ÆSCHYLUS TO WAGNER—PRESENTATION OF MUSIC DRAMA—POEM AND VERSIFICATION—MUSIC AND MOTIVES.

One cardinal fact concerning Wagner's art must be consistently remembered by all who seek to understand the master. This fact is that Wagner was first and foremost a man of the theatre, and a musician only insomuch as music was necessary to his theatrical conceptions. That he was one of the world's greatest musicians, a daring innovator bringing revolutionary changes in ideology, in form and in subject to this art, is, of course, obvious. But Wagner's musical achievement is actually subsidiary and corollary to his theatrical conceptions.

The art of the theatre must not be confused with any of those individual æsthetic elements which go to its making. At its widest, it embraces mime, speech, poetry, the dance, music, and decoration. At its narrowest, it may be reduced almost to any one of these. But it must be remembered that the æsthetic primacy of Wagnerian technique and accomplishment is the primacy of the art of the theatre, and not merely of the musician's art.

Unfortunately, thanks in large measure to the fact that the music-mind had dominated pre-Wagnerian opera, post-Wagnerian criticism and exegesis has been

limited almost entirely to musical authorities. This peculiar inelasticity is demonstrated to-day very clearly by the fact that our principal journals send their musical critics to deal with Wagnerian opera, when, if they cannot send both dramatic and musical critics, it is perfectly obvious that preference should be given to the former. One can imagine that the dramaturgy of English opera, and for that matter the productions of most of the Continental houses, would speedily be lifted from the slough of bathos and futility in which music-mind has kept them, if the criticism of opera had thus been raised above the tyranny of musicianly mentality.

For this subjugation of all the elements of music drama to the arbitrary dictates of composer and conductor, no one can possess a more supreme contempt than Wagner himself expressed throughout his writing. It is indeed abundantly clear that Wagner was as much concerned about the other factors which make up the sum total of his achievement as he was with his musical ideas and technique. The myth-content, for example, and the dramatic plausibility of the libretti of "The Ring," engaged a great part of his attention, and his tremendous interest in the mechanical side of presentation and in the completion of visual illusion not only contributed to the placing of those dramas at the forefront of theatrical achievement but gave a new impetus to the improvement of the mechanical technique of the theatre as a whole. Indeed, it is not too much to say that his contributions in this direction are as significant as his contributions to the evolution of musical form and ideology.

The four corner-stones of the great world-theatre must by the right of artistic prerogative be inscribed

with the names of Æschylus, Shakespeare, Molière, Wagner. The Greek dramatist sealed and hallowed the dramatic literary form. He is the primal playwright, the founder of classic drama. Shakespeare, like Æschylus, represents the completed product of another era of æsthetic travail, for the theatre of Shakespeare combined the past-mastery of classicism with the more abounding æsthetic output of mediævalism, of romance. Molière, with a more circumscribed objective in view, that objective being the reaction of individual idiosyncrasies and characteristics to immediate social environment, must, as the creator or rather the formulator of comedy, claim our third corner-stone for his own. And if we consider these men against their historico-social background, we shall see that each of them is the product of the changing conditions which it is the supreme function of the drama to express.

Now the growing complexity of the social nexus between the seventeenth and nineteenth century tended increasingly to specialisation of function of individual members of society; so to freeing the creators and executants of art, and so to giving a more professionalised and more virtuosic group of craftsmen to the theatre. Professionalism increased, and the vocation of the theatre, which at the time of Molière had developed from the more or less casual vagabondage of the strolling player to the comparatively fixed life of the repertory actor, now began to make increased demands upon other than merely histrionic and literary craftsmen. Wagner's dramaturgy, as expressed in the operas of "The Ring," represents the completed evolution of the theatre as an all-embracing æsthetic focus—completed, that is, as regards æsthetic content, though by no

means as regards technique of presentation or representation.

Wagner was in very truth a child of the theatre. We find that his early associations at Leipzig and elsewhere were largely theatrical. His favourite sister was a *prima donna* at the age of sixteen, and there was the overwhelming inclination to defy his family's determination to keep him clear of the theatre to drive him inevitably to the playhouse. While still in his early teens, we find him experimenting with a puppet show, the property of his late step-father, for which the latter had designed scenery. One of Wagner's earliest dramatic efforts, indeed, was the preparation of a knightly play for which incidentally, and significantly enough, he also manufactured puppets. From this early beginning, the next step was the writing of a drama, "Leubald und Adelaïde," a drama compact of elements from Shakespeare's "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Macbeth," and Goethe's "Goetz von Berlichingen."

It was as a result of his recognition of the value of the musical element in dramatic production that Wagner turned to music, for, after the strong resentment of the family had been roused by the discovery that he had wasted his schooltime in order to devote himself to the writing of a play, he turned to the study of music in order to compose a suitable setting for his cherished and now lost romantic drama. But Wagner, although pre-eminent as a musician, always recognised that the composer must follow the author, not the author the composer. And the greatness of his music drama is in large measure due to the fact that he saw his work as a theatric whole and not as a musical concept to which incidentalia of literature, histrionic, decorative, and

manipulative technique, might be added under the tolerant indifference of the music-mind.

It may seem a far cry from Wagner's own ideas of the theatre to the practical presentation of his work to-day, but the opera-lover who seeks to understand "The Ring," to attain a clear view of the trilogy and to compare various presentations of it in the theatre, is urged not to overlook this aspect of the case. Wagner's great imagination and his abounding and energetic enthusiasm took into account, as well as the musical and literary techniques employed, the possibilities of scene, of stage management, even of the very architecture of the playhouse. Elsewhere reference is made to his preoccupations in these various realms, but it should be pointed out here that his work in this direction was very largely pioneer work, and although Wagner made vast strides forward, in improving the *vraisemblance* and extending in all directions the creative illusion of music drama, it would certainly not be in accordance with the wishes of this forth-reaching creator that no use should be made of any means for perfecting the dramaturgy of his music dramas which were not to hand in his own time. His practice as a *metteur en scène*, for example, would certainly have been enormously modified from the clumsy usages of Bayreuth had he had the advantages now obtaining in the theatre which have followed the development of the stage electricians' technique.

Contemporary productions of "The Ring" should not, then, be judged according to the closeness with which they approximate to the bulky, solid, and pseudo-realistic treatment of the 'sixties and 'seventies, but according as they express and embody the plays by a use of the theatrical apparatus now in our possession.

We must remember, too, that Wagner's own practice as a *metteur en scène* represented in his own time a revolt towards realism from the obvious theatricality then obtaining in the playhouses of Europe. Just as he saw how the virtuosity of the singer had distorted the old folk-tunes into operatic arias which were mere lifeless exercises for the larynx of some popular soprano, so he saw that the gaudy theatrical production in the second half of the nineteenth century had no æsthetic life of its own. That he failed to obtain realism and even *vraisemblance* along these lines must not be taken to imply that the revolt was not an invaluable step forward in the evolution of theatrical custom.

The tendency in our own time is to revolt against these realistic or naturalistic conventions and to turn more and more to what one may roughly call symbolic simplicity—not, be it noted, to revert to the gaudy theatricity of the former age. But the effectiveness of the mere methods of stagecraft depends very largely on mechanical and scientific appliances non-existent a few years back, but which assuredly would have been welcomed by a master-craftsman like Wagner, eager to avail himself of each and every apparatus or device which would extend and enhance illusion.

The material between the covers of the scores of "Rheingold," "Die Walküre," "Siegfried," and "Götterdämmerung," is of that ample cut-and-come-again quantity allied generally with superlative quality, such as is found in Shakespeare's works. Given a performance by first-rate executants it is possible to handle the German master's as it is possible to handle the British playwright's works in any manner from the spectacular-realistic to the symbolic-abstract. In other words, so

long as we have for Shakespeare actors who know their job and for Wagner a conductor, musicians, and singers who know theirs, a great deal can be done with comparatively little additional means at our disposal, and very much more can be done given greater resources. In short, presentational or representational stagecraft may be employed with equal effect and validity.

In London, to-day, it is vain to seek a great opera-house where " The Ring " may adequately be staged in the most fitting and necessarily extravagant manner. Only the London Coliseum of all the thirty odd play-houses of the metropolis possesses the equipment requisite and suitable for the mounting of " The Ring." With its great revolving stage and its magnificent lighting installation, this house could certainly give us most that is required to produce the needful illusion of those imaginative scenes with their perpetually changing conditions of time and space. Yet there are outstanding disabilities. For example, no theatrical engineer has yet provided a really workable steam-curtain, such as Wagner sought to introduce, nor has an adequate substitute been found. Probably for anything like an ideal performance, even with the means now at our disposal—and means at which, be it repeated, Wagner never guessed—the kinema with its monochromatic and two-dimensional unsatisfactoriness would have to be used to assist the visual illusion. Even so, the Coliseum could not be considered completely satisfactory, since the orchestra is not concealed, and such concealment to assure adequate tonality would probably involve major structural alterations.

When Wagner conceived the idea of composing operas on a symphonic as opposed to the older melodic

principle, that is, when he adopted a system of *Durchcomponieren* (composing throughout), as opposed to the alternating aria and recitative of the Glück and Meyerbeer type of opera, the corollary in stagecraft was the transformation from scene to scene. This wise man of the theatre had come to learn that you cannot suddenly cut off the visual illusion by dropping your curtain and expect the auditory illusion to be carried on in the same register. In short, he saw that musical *Durchcomponieren* implied decorative *Durchcomponieren*, and this implication projected a problem of stage management which has so far never been satisfactorily solved.

Perhaps the three-dimensional and panchromatic kinema of the future, combined with synchronised reproduction and amplification of voice and orchestra, will resolve the vast technical difficulties which this far-flung mind created when he also created a world-masterpiece. Certainly it is not too much to prophesy that the material Wagner has provided as the basis of theatrical production will absorb all the proficiencies and advantages of interpretative and reproductive technique which the future is likely to supply. Perhaps for future generations of playgoers it may be said that the Rhine has become Wagner's washpot and across the clouds of the morning he will drive forth his Valkyries.

But failing great spectacular productions, with their inevitable expenditure of vast sums of money, to create anything like adequate illusion the production of " The Ring " dramas to-day must not involve the continued use of the banal and dreary pseudo-realistic settings with which irreverent directors have been wont to fob us off in the past on the idiotic fallacy that, so long as the music was efficient, all the rest would pass muster.

If we cannot have spectacular magnificence, let us resign ourselves to the inevitable. But let us be content with nothing that is not dignified and which, if it does not completely illustrate, at least does not distort and defeat the author's intention.

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When we turn now from general considerations of Wagnerian dramaturgy to the tetralogy which is the subject of our immediate study, we find two main departments claiming our attention, one being the poem, and the other the musical structure of the work. We have already seen how Wagner was enticed to the mythological subject, and how, when he had given up hope of completing "The Ring" as music drama, the poem was published. This dramatic poem, combining, as it does, the early and—so far as the Northern races were concerned—pre-dramatic narrative, and also the highly developed theatrical form of the nineteenth century, was indeed, when considered merely as literature, a most original and unusual achievement.

Mythological subjects had, of course, previously been dealt with by modern librettists and dramatists, but the books of all preceding operas can certainly not claim, as Wagner's "Ring" poem certainly can, to have graced, and not to have done injustice to their parent literature, whether of Hellenic or Northern origin. Wagner, indeed, struck from the mediæval literature which inspired him a new currency. As Albert Lavignac wrote of this poem:

"It is in truth neither the mythology of the North nor that of the Rhine. It is Wagnerian mythology, just as the religion of the Grail, which is to be noted in 'Lohengrin,' and which we can rediscover in 'Parsifal,' is not the Christian religion but a special

cult, born of Wagner's brain, by the help of certain legends equally poetised and transformed."

By the very nature of its origin and also by reason of Wagner's intense folk-consciousness, we may expect to find his drama unsophisticated almost to the verge at times of *naïveté*. The mingling of spell and magic, of curse and blessing, and their repercussions on the conduct and destiny of gods, demigods, and humans, makes inevitably for a certain epic simplicity of treatment. But this simplicity is complicated in the case of the Wagnerian poem by the master's more profound ethical concepts and the symbology by which he expresses these.

When the "Ring" poem as a whole is considered from the point of view of its dramatic suitability, one major criticism is likely immediately to occur to the discerning reader. That is, its highly repetitive nature. Over and over again in the course of the four sections we are informed of the events which provoked the particular situation in hand. For those who are already generally familiar with the context of the drama as a whole, these repetitions frequently lead to a natural restiveness. At the same time, it must be remembered that each section of "The Ring" must in a measure stand by itself, and as, in many cases, so far as the average English auditor is concerned, this necessity is unfortunately inevitable, a lenient attitude may perhaps be adopted in regard to this somewhat prodigal overemphasis. In any case, Wagner's age was, from a literary point of view, inclined to a decidedly emphatic and even overcrowded method, and if Wagner was a child of his age, we may be pardoned if we blame his age for his faults while thanking that age for its son. The practical embodiment of Wagnerian dramas in

their theatrical form can, however, overcome any difficulties of redundancy by quite simple and by no means sacrilegious adaptation.

. . . . . .

To clothe his mythological subject, Wagner very suitably decided to employ the older forms of verse used in the Middle Ages by various Teutonic and Scandinavian races. This *Stabreim*, or alliterative verse, known in English literature only in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English writings (it is used by Langland in his "Piers Plowman"), with its wealth of Romance association, was eminently suitable for the literary purpose of Wagnerian drama. Wagner seems to have been the first composer to recognise its additional force in musical setting. There is in this verse-form a sweep and surge which neither blank verse nor the more elaborate metrical forms possess, a rugged insistent folk-quality, perfectly attuning to the themes of "The Ring." There is, moreover, a great flexibility in this informal form, whose main characteristic is a sort of back-and-forth rhythmic swing pointed by single, double, or even triple alliteration.

Der **Au**gen **l**euchtendes Paar,
das **o**ft ich **l**ächelnd ge**K**o**s**t,
wenn **K**ampfes**l**u**s**t
ein **K**uss dir **l**ohnte,
wenn **k**indisch **l**allend
der **H**elden **L**ob
von **h**olden **L**ippen dir floss;
dieser **Au**gen **s**trahlendes Paar,
das **o**ft im **St**urm mir geglänzt,
wenn **H**offnungs**s**ehnen

das **H**erz mir **s**engte,
nach **W**elten**w**onne
mein **W**unsch **v**erlangte
aus **w**ild **w**ebenden Bangen :
zum **l**etzten **M**al
**l**etz' es **m**ich heut
**m**it des **L**ebewohles
**l**etztem Kuss !

This quotation (from Wotan's farewell to Brünnhilde in the third act of " Die Walküre ") illustrates the form, the first two lines of which can thus be metrically expressed :

∪ – ∪ – ∪ ∪ – / ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ∪ –

[∪ denoting a short (unstressed), – a long (stressed) syllable.]

It then changes to the form :

∪ – ∪ – / ∪ – ∪ –

which makes for greater speed. The alliterations in the first two lines are seen to be double, the Au-O making one, and the L's the other. In the third, fourth, and fifth lines is the double alliteration on K and L, whereas in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth lines we have a simple alliteration on the W-(V-) sound. This alliterative verse has another particular merit with regard to musical setting, that the ear can pick out the sense with much greater facility, there being a natural carry-over of verbal meaning owing to the very alliteration, which aids phonetic discrimination.

This, however, makes translation into an adequate English rendering a matter of conspicuous difficulty, for it must be noted that, if it is necessary completely to express the whole content of the verse in another lan-

guage, not only must the sense and the verbal play be indicated, but the essential stresses must fall concurrently with the musical stress, while, at the same time, the many almost untranslateable details of folk ideology are likewise transposed into the new medium. This fourfold task almost defies accomplishment.

. . . . . .

Turning now from the literary to the musical aspect, we find that the whole four sections of " The Ring " may be looked upon actually as one homogeneous whole, not only as regards the continuity of the story, but as regards the musical structure. Almost one-half of the thematic material of which the whole opera is built up actually appears in " Das Rheingold," and by the time " Die Walküre " has run its course more than two-thirds of these themes have made insistent appearance. There is, however, another side of this homogeneity, which is to be seen in the fact that each single drama resembles in many ways an individual movement of a symphony. The broadly-developing *adagio* of the introductory " Rheingold " gives place to the lyric and romantic *andante* of " Die Walküre." The third movement, " Siegfried," with its youthful joyousness and impetuosity, may well be labelled *scherzo ;* while the final movement, beginning with its rich *largo* effect, develops into a noble *allegro.*

The most definite and outstanding characteristic which divides the music of Wagner from that of his predecessors is the recurrence of more or less precise phrases which have a definite intellectual as well as emotional function in the symphonic development of the dramas. Pre-Wagnerian composers had, of course, made use of certain repeated phrases ; indeed, it is common

knowledge that the movements of sonatas and symphonies are generally built upon one or more simple musical themes, elaborated into variations which are themselves woven, by means of melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, or contrapuntal devices, into a coherent whole.

The symphonies of Beethoven illustrate this usage very clearly, but it is to be remarked that the various themes employed in the Beethoven symphony are purely emotional in their appeal. Beethoven, indeed, raised music to the plane of the definite expression of personal and subjective emotion. Whereas, speaking generally, Beethoven's predecessors had relied upon rhythm and pattern, that is, more or less impersonal and objective elements, to create their emotional impact, Beethoven's practice relies very largely upon sundry invocative themes which, as they disappear and reappear in the structure of his compositions, and as they are involved in or disentangled from each other, expound the emotional content of his thought. But the Beethoven themes are always in essence emotional and non-intellectual. They are concerned with the feelings, and not with ideas.

On the other hand, certain other composers—and this is particularly true of operatic writers—employed musical themes which, by association, provoke a definite intellectual conception, a notion rather than an emotion.

For example, a drum-roll may be used to signify thunder, tympani to suggest musketry, chromatics on the French horn to suggest the hoot of an owl. But these aids, although they induce emotion, are imitative and intellectual, as implying association of ideas, and

not fundamentally emotional in conception, although they are so in result. Of course, various admixtures of these two methods are to be found in pre-Wagnerian music. But Wagner was the first composer consciously to link notion and emotion into definite phrases which form, as it were, the raw material out of which these operas were constructed.

To this musical concept—the bricks, as it were, of his symphonic edifice—the name of *leit-motif* is given. These "leading motives," of which almost a hundred are to be found clearly recurring in different parts, and some throughout the whole of "The Ring," and the principal of which are printed at the end of this volume, are not only used in the simple dramatic sense to draw the attention of the audience to a personality, a deed, an idea or state of mind; an individual motive may itself be symphonically developed, and so mood may be added to the thought. The motives themselves, again, may be simple: Siegfried's Horn-call (see p. 195, No. 30), for example, is an easily-comprehended and directly dramatic motive, whereas the idea of Walhall (5) has to be expressed by a stately and noble progression of chords involving not a single instrument, but a considerable part of the orchestra. The Rhine-motive (1) is generally associated with quickly-moving string passages, which admirably describe the flow and glitter of the waves and the joyousness of the maidens who dwell and sport therein. These are descriptive motives, whereas the Sword (18), the emblem of selfless heroism, has a much more abstract and intellectual basis.

We have indicated elsewhere the principal motives which go to the making of "The Ring," but the reader who wishes completely to follow Wagner's underlying

intention by witnessing the music-dramas in the opera-house will do well to consult the more elaborate musical treatises. For it must be clearly understood that Wagner's use of *leit-motif* is not merely to add a musical ideology to the words of the book, but that very often the thought behind the word, or the idea prompting it, is thus musically expressed simultaneously. Thus a double revelation is made possible. Here, again, one is conscious of the essential theatric quality of this master. For as Beethoven conquered form, reducing pattern and rhythm from their former priority to a position of subservience to their emotional objective, so Wagner took over the Beethoven legacy and developed music in relation to the definite ideas, personalities, things, and states of which his drama treats. In a word, he externalised and intensified the invocative quality of music which in Beethoven remains internal.

The reader who listens to " The Ring " in the opera-house or studies the score will be struck with the similarity or correspondence of many of the motives, and will observe that there is a definite continuity and clearly-recognised evolution of motivation as the work progresses. Thus the simple Anvil-motive (12) becomes the basis of the motivation of the Nibelungen idea in its various manifestations throughout the work, and is discernible in a modified form as Nibelungen-hate and in its use in conjunction with Hagen. In the same way, the theme of Renunciation (11b)—with which also appears a very similar theme, the Regret for the renounced love (11)—is used not only in relation to Alberich's renunciation of love in order to retain the gold, but also in a more noble form in conjunction with Wotan's renunciation of his daughter Brünnhilde,

and for her loss of godhead. We find, again, the simple Dragon (14) and Giant (8) motives appearing in greater elaboration in reference to Fafner. We shall find, too, an essential similarity between the Rhine-theme (1) and that of the Norns (16), and this similarity is easily comprehended when we remember that the Rhine is the primal water-mother of the world, just as Erda, the mother of the Norns, for whom the motive (16) is also employed, is the earth-mother. The frequent use of this Norn-motive in conjunction with the motive of the Decline of the gods (17) suggests very clearly in terms of musical ideology how the fallen state of the gods results from Wotan's abuse of the beneficent powers of nature. Another significant similarity is noticeable in the motive of the Ring (4) and that of Walhall (5), the former being a simpler version in the minor key of the grandiose and more harmonically developed major theme, the obvious implication being that the power of the ring and the might of the gods' fastness are closely comparable. In connection with the Walhall-motive, again, we shall observe one of the most striking examples of Wagner's method of implying a change of state in the subject of his music by a modification of the motive when, in "Götterdämmerung," we meet a disrupted and tragic version of the Walhall-theme which finely accords with the evanescent glory of the burg. A similar development in the opposite direction is to be seen in the creation of the theme of Siegfried's Heroism (35) from the simple melody of the Horn-call (30). Again, the Bird-song (32, section c) contains the essentials, although rhythmically varied, of the theme of Brünnhilde's Sleep (29), which is in itself a rhythmic variation of the Rhine-theme. Also in the Bird-song is to be

noted a modification of the motive of the Valkyries' Ride (22), and the bearing of this thematic material on the dramatic incident is clear when it is recalled that the bird is conducting Siegfried to the sleeping warrior-maiden.

The foregoing must only be regarded as a few of the outstanding instances of the consistence of musical subject and evolution of theme, but they serve to illustrate the homogeneity of the material from whose elemental simplicities, varied and elaborated in accordance with his purposeful mastery, Wagner created the most expansive and eloquent symphonic structure.

Wagner's work as a creator of an art form may be summarised in the word "music-drama." He raised this form on the foundation of the aria- and coloratura-ridden opera of his predecessors and contemporaries. And although some of his successors have, with the customary conservatism of music-mind, maintained their allegiance to the older and feebler form, the influence of Wagner's revolutionary technique is observable in the later work of Verdi, throughout the masterworks of Russian opera, and in the outstanding modern music of French and English composers. In the direct tradition, Richard Strauss stands foremost to-day, and although the Austrian composer has developed his own vehicle, this certainly derives from the Wagnerian innovation. In England to-day two composers of eminence, in particular, own fealty to the German master, Rutland Boughton, who sought at Glastonbury to found an English Bayreuth, and Josef Holbrooke. The ambitious trilogy of music-dramas which Mr. Holbrooke has given us represent perhaps the nearest approach, both in their epic myth-content and in the magnitude of their

musical and theatrical conceptions, to Wagner's "Ring." "Dylan," "The Children of Don," and "Bronwen," with their treatment of the ancient British legends of the Mabinogion, may be said to owe foster-parenthood to the Siegfried drama. With the development of a definite democratic appreciation of music-drama throughout Great Britain to-day—a development which owes its genesis mainly to the magnificent pioneer work of Sir Thomas Beecham, and which is carried on at the moment by the British National Opera Company in their manful struggle against the same odds which menaced, but never overcame, Wagner himself—it is perhaps not too much to hope that the near future will not only provide the British public with opportunities of witnessing "The Ring" performed with all the adjuncts of modern stagecraft, vocal and orchestral technique, but also enable a close comparison to be made between this and these related works.

## CHAPTER IV

THE STORY—ALLEGORICAL CONSTITUENTS—NORTHERN AND MEDITERRANEAN MYTHS—SIEGFRIED, CHRIST AND SUPERMAN.

It is possible to regard "The Ring" story from any one of a number of points of view. It can be taken simply as an interesting theatrical plot, a folk-tale or fairy story of gods and dwarfs and men. On the other hand, it can be taken as a profound allegory of human relationship to the Infinite, or, robbed of its dualistic elements, as a constructive study in ethics. Others have seen in it an allegorical exposition of the growth of the German nation. As a matter of fact, it is possible to read into this great treatment of a great epic an enormous variety of philosophical, ethical, and historical concepts.

In its barest outline, the story runs as follows: The Nibelung dwarf, Alberich, coming from his cavernous abode, Nibelheim, after unsuccessfully wooing the Rhine-daughters who guard the gold, and then forswearing love for ever, steals the gold from its resting place in the depths of the Rhine and fashions from it the ring of revenge. Alberich proceeds, by virtue of the magic properties of the ring, to compel his brother Mime and the other Nibelung dwarfs to become his bond-slaves, and forces Mime to make for him a magic cap of invisibility, Tarnhelm.

The hoard of treasure, including the ring and Tarn-

helm, is in turn wrested from Alberich by Wotan, the lord of Walhall, who has bargained with the two giants, Fafner and Fasolt, that, in return for their efforts in the building of Walhall, they shall receive the goddess Freia, whose mystical duty it is to tend the golden apples, the daily consumption of which renews the immortality of the gods.

This compact and the breaking of it, to which reference is made later, provides one of the main motives of the story and music. For Fricka, Wotan's wife, insistently reminds him of this compact, which Wotan proposes to break by informing the giants that he will not give the fleeing Freia to them. Loge (Loki), the fire-god, has meantime been searching for a ransom for Freia, which he can nowhere find. But when he tells Wotan of the gold, Wotan proposes that the giants accept this as the ransom and proceeds with Loge to Nibelheim to steal the gold from the thief, although Loge warns Wotan that the gold should by right be restored to the Rhine-daughters.

As a matter of fact, Wotan wishes himself to retain the ring, by whose magic properties he hopes to free himself from his own difficulties. By a trick the gold is obtained, and Wotan returns to the upper earth to give the gold to the giants, himself retaining the ring. Unfortunately for him, however, there is not sufficient gold completely to cover Freia when the hoard is piled in front of her between the giants' staves. For Freia is still left partly visible, and to fulfil his word Wotan is obliged to add ring and wishing-cap to the pile.

Wotan is inspired to yield up the ring by the appearance and advice of Erda, the earth-mother. The curse which Alberich formerly pronounced upon the ring

begins to work, and Fafner quarrels with and kills Fasolt, and himself goes off with the hoard. The giant seeks a forest cave where in dragon form he guards his unholy plunder. Wotan meanwhile has promised to create a new power—that is, a new personality—who shall redeem all, and the sword is to be the symbol of this redemption. The gods enter into Walhall, and the prologue, "Rheingold," draws to an end with their crossing the rainbow bridge into Wotan's glorious castle.

Siegmund and Sieglinde, with whose fortunes the second part of "The Ring," "Die Walküre," is concerned, represent the first stage of Wotan's creation of the saving race of the Wälsungs. We are here shown the meeting of the pair in the house of Hunding, Sieglinde's husband. Siegmund tells how since his early youth, when his sister and mother had disappeared, he had always been pursued by ill-luck till now, when he has had to seek refuge, unarmed, in the house of Hunding, a member of the enemy race. The two recognise one another. Hunding grants Siegmund hospitality for the night, and retires with Sieglinde, who, however, returns and tells Siegmund of a former visit of a wanderer who left a sword bedded up to the hilt in the roof-tree of the house. This sword the defenceless Siegmund pulls out of the tree, and, accompanied by Sieglinde after the two have realised their kinship to one another, in an ecstasy of love departs from Hunding's house.

Brünnhilde, chief of the Walküre and favourite daughter of Wotan, is entrusted by Wotan with the fate of Siegmund. But Fricka, Wotan's wife, is outraged by the guilty love of Siegmund and Sieglinde, and compels Wotan to give victory to Hunding. Brünnhilde informs

Siegmund that he will die in the battle, but inspired by his love for Sieglinde she promises him her help. He leaves the sleeping Sieglinde and fights with Hunding, but Wotan intervenes, and on his spear Siegmund's invincible sword, Nothung, is broken. Wotan is in despair at the death of his son, and Hunding is killed by the god's terrible glance.

Wotan seeks out Brünnhilde to chastise her for her disobedience. Brünnhilde tells her father that, after he had countermanded his original order that she was to aid Siegmund, she yet persisted, knowing this to be his inward will. Nevertheless, fate demands retribution. Wotan takes from Brünnhilde her immortality, and invokes Loge, who surrounds the warrior maid with fire, whereafter Wotan leaves his favourite child sleeping on the rock, where she must await her awakening by a fearless hero who will dare the flames. This is the end of the second part, " Die Walküre," which is followed by the third drama, " Siegfried."

The child of Sieglinde and Siegmund, Siegfried, has been brought up in a cave in the midst of a forest by the Nibelung smith, Mime, and " Siegfried " opens with Mime forging a sword for the hero. Mime thinks, by the help of the young Wälsung, to overcome the giant Fafner, who has changed himself by means of the wishing-cap, Tarnhelm, into a dragon, and guards the hoard in another forest lair. Siegfried learns from the dwarf how his mother, before she died soon after his birth, had given him his name and entrusted to the dwarf the fragments of the sword Nothung which had belonged to Siegmund. Siegfried himself forges these into an invincible sword and sets out with Mime to destroy the dragon, Fafner.

Alberich is waiting to seize the gold from the dragon, and Wotan tells him that he will do nothing to save the race of the Wälsungs, for Alberich fears that Siegfried will win the ring which he himself covets. Wotan also warns Alberich that Mime is his rival for the ring. Mime tries to make Siegfried afraid of the dragon, but Siegfried kills Fafner, whose dying words are a warning to him to beware of Mime. His hand is smeared with the dragon's blood, and immediately he understands the song of a bird, which tells him of the power of Tarnhelm and the ring, advising him to seek them in the cave. Mime endeavours to poison Siegfried in order that he may win the treasure, but Siegfried, understanding his treachery, kills him, and the bird leads the fearless hero to Brünnhilde's rock. Wotan has gone thither, and there consults Erda, the mother of the Valkyries, but he decides eventually not to endeavour to modify fate. He does, however, interpose in the path of the young hero, but Siegfried strikes at Wotan's lance with the sword Nothung, and the god recognises himself vanquished by the impetuous Wälsung, who proceeds to awaken to human life and love the quondam immortal, Brünnhilde. At first she resists Siegfried's ardours, but eventually she abandons the cause of the gods and yields to the hero, this marking the end of the third section of the tetralogy.

" Götterdämmerung " begins with Brünnhilde urging Siegfried to new exploits, and the lovers exchange gages. He gives her the ring, and she gives him Grane, her courser, on which he sets out for the Rhine. Hagen, a son of Alberich by Grimmhilde, knows of the union of the Valkyrie and the Wälsung, but he advises his half-brother, Gunther, and the latter's sister, Gutrune,

to seek to strengthen the Gibichung race, to which they belong, by stronger alliances, and, not disclosing the love of Brünnhilde and Siegfried, suggests that Gunther shall make Brünnhilde his bride. Gutrune, he says, should wed Siegfried. When the latter arrives, Gunther and he swear friendship. By a philtre Siegfried is made to forget Brünnhilde and to demand Gutrune for wife, and promises in return to bring Brünnhilde as bride to Gunther. This he does by means of Tarnhelm.

Meanwhile Brünnhilde's sister, Waltraute, conjures Brünnhilde to save Walhall by returning the ring to the Rhine-daughters. But Brünnhilde would rather see Walhall perish than yield the precious love-gage. Siegfried comes in and conquers Brünnhilde in the guise and name of Gunther, and taking the ring from her finger puts it on his own. Hagen swears to Alberich that he will get back the ring for the Nibelung before Siegfried, who cares nothing for its power, yields it to the Rhine-daughters. Gunther and Brünnhilde arrive, and Brünnhilde, overwhelmed with grief at seeing Siegfried, remains silent.

Siegfried, of course, does not remember his love for Brünnhilde, but she sees the ring on his finger, and Gunther does not know how to explain this away. Hagen pretends that the Wälsung has been false and presses Brünnhilde to denounce Siegfried, telling Gunther that she had given herself body and soul to the Wälsung. Siegfried solemnly swears that he has respected Brünnhilde as Gunther's bride.

Hagen offers to avenge Brünnhilde, and Brünnhilde reveals that, when she herself made Siegfried invulnerable, it was with the sure knowledge that he would never turn his back to a foe. Hagen next proposes to

Gunther, and persuades him to allow him to kill Siegfried. A hunting trip is arranged for the next day on the banks of the Rhine. Siegfried comes, having lost his way, to the Rhine bank, where the Rhine-daughters offer to find his quarry for him in exchange for the ring, but he will not give up the price of his combat with Fafner at first, though afterwards he agrees to do so. Then, however, the Rhine-daughters refuse the gift, knowing of the fate which awaits Siegfried.

The hunt rejoins Siegfried. Hagen gives him a potion which reawakens his memory, and Gunther begins to understand, all too late, the plot, for Hagen drives his spear into the hero's back. The vassals bear the hero's body to Gunther's home. Hagen demands the ring and, when it is refused, kills Gunther. But when he tries to wrest the ring from Siegfried the dead hand rises menacingly.

Brünnhilde comes, and at her orders a great funeral pyre is built for Siegfried. She sees Wotan's ravens in the sky, and bids them return to Walhall and say that all is accomplished, and that the race of the gods will soon cease to be. Wearing the ring, she lights the pyre under the body, bids Loge return to and claim Walhall, and tells the attendant people that the race of gods is extinct, that the universe is masterless, but that love, supremely powerful, is left to them. Then, leaping on to Grane, she bounds into the flames. The Rhine overflows and the Rhine-daughters reclaim the ring. Hagen dives into the flood to save it, but is borne down by two of the Undines, while the third joyously brandishes the refound treasure. On high, Walhall is seen to be consumed in an ocean of flames.

Thus ends "The Twilight of the Gods," the last

moving episode of the history of "The Ring of the Nibelungs."

From this brief sketch of the story of "The Ring," which is handled in detail elsewhere in this volume, it will be gathered that Wagner's departure from the Germanic and Norse legends is considerable. He uses them, indeed, purely as the basis of a structure for the development of his own philosophical and æsthetic conceptions. How profound these conceptions are, and how far-reaching, may also be gathered by the reader who knows no more than is above stated. Various exegetes of Wagnerism have endeavoured, with more or less success, to build up vast superstructures of argument upon the material which Wagner has provided, and his work has been studied and expounded as pure symbolism, as mythology, even as politics, as well as from the philosophical and ethical aspect. As with Goethe's "Faust" and Shakespeare's "Hamlet," apologists have crowded in on this masterpiece, intent on claiming it as the pound of their particular parish of thought.

The writer prefers to consider "The Ring," however, as a great theatrical concept, the product, and as regards its individual details often as a collection of the by-products, of a great creative imagination, principally concerned with the externalising and establishment of its own many-sided ideas, experiences, and syntheses. If, then, we take it that the play's the thing, and accept the primacy of drama in regard to "The Ring," there yet remains a vast amount of the not merely dramatic for him who sits in his stall to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.

First—and here we are faced by one aspect of the Wagnerian conception which has remained very largely

outside the exposition of the Wagnerian commentators —we can see in this story a criticism of the finance-materialism of his time. Wagner's personal struggles with perpetual poverty and the preoccupation of the *bourgeoisie* of his time with the creation and retention of wealth, a preoccupation which was shared by Victorian England and was by no means exclusively German, doubtless drove him to stress this sociological phase in a work which occupied so large a part of his life. This economic conception can be very clearly gathered, and its underlying criticism of *bourgeois* mentality is easily discernible in the tragic power with which the gold is accredited.

With all hesitancy in forcing an allegory to the harsher lineaments of logic, it may be yet permissible to point the economic moral of the stealing of the gold by the inferior beings, the Nibelungs, and the curse which followed remorselessly upon that theft, with its consequent renunciation of love, for which one may read humanity and compassion. The murder of Fasolt by Fafner, and the senseless hoarding of the treasure by the murderer, who must needs turn himself into a dragon to protect his useless spoil, the indifference of the hero, Siegfried, to the ring, and its eventual renunciation by the creative intelligence, Brünnhilde, need only be mentioned to illustrate this simple economic bearing of the myth.

Commentators, again, have drawn attention to the similarity between much of the Wagnerian ideology and that of the Æschylean drama, and, indeed, of the Greek tragic theatre as a whole. In its general development there is, of course, a great deal common to the Teutonic-Scandinavian mythology and the legends of

the Mediterranean peoples. Thus we find many points of similarity between Hippolyta, the Amazon queen, and Brünnhilde, the virgin leader of the Valkyries, and between Wotan (Odin) of the northern sagas and Zeus (Jupiter), the omnipotent deity of Mediterranea.

The gods of north and south are seen again to be subjects of the same wandering affections, curbed in both cases by consorts who represent the spirit of convention, social stability, endowed with a not unsurprising lack of originality, resenting those creative, if errant, impulses which, if they destroyed the peace of the divine hearth in Walhall or Olympus, do not altogether prove maleficent to the universe as a whole. Thus we see Fricka, like Juno of the Latin legends, curbing the uncertain inclinations of her lord. We see these gods, the expression of supreme will, consorting with deities of a lower order, and even with humans, to present the world with heroes. And these descendants of the gods, invincible heroes with dragon-slaying propensities, destined to the glories of immortal legend by their very mortality, bear a similarity to each other, although parted by a continent and distinguished by fundamental differences of race and period.

There are many other points of similarity between Wagner's use of the Scandinavian and Teutonic legends and the ideas underlying the tragic drama of Greece. The curse borne by the gold when originally stolen by Alberich, and re-stated by him when Wotan in turn steals from the thief, resembles the ancestral curse of Greek tragedy—it is carried on to the third and fourth generation, and only heroic atonement can wipe it out.

Again, in the Wagnerian legend-treatment we have the three divisions of the universe: Nibelheim, the dark

abode of the dwarfs, is comparable with the Hades of classic literature ; and Walhall, the blessed abode of the gods and of departed heroes, with Olympus the Elysian fields, and so on ; between them is the world as we know it, a sort of *terra communis* of the higher and lower beings, as well as of mankind. Freia, the goddess of youth and spring, the incarnation of womanly loveliness, prey of the Giants, will be recognised as the goddess Persephone (Proserpine), symbol of the rejuvenescence of spring, daughter of Ceres, goddess of the earth's bounty, carried away by Pluto to dwell for half the year in the nether regions. In Loge (Loki), the mysterious cunning lord of fire, to whom the downfall of the other gods bequeaths their heritage, we see the northern personification of the Greek Phosphoros and the Latin Lucifer, while his ubiquity of service reminds us in some ways of Mercury. Erda, the earth-mother, warning the gods out of the depths of her intuitive wisdom, resembles in some measure Pallas Athene.

The vulnerability of Siegfried's shoulder-blade, when for the rest he was safe from attack, has its counterpart in the legend of the Achillean heel, and the magic properties of the dragon's blood which attune Siegfried's ear to the voices of nature and make him understand the language of the birds are seen in another form in the Greek legend of Jason's sowing of the dragon's teeth.

In the story of the slaying of the dragon, we have indeed a reference to an almost universal folk-myth, for not only are the heroes of classic and northern mythology repeatedly dowered with this prowess against the evil forces of nature, but we find similar stories em-

bodied in the Christian mythology (St. George, St. Patrick) and even in the folk-tales of Central Africa and Asia. The dragon, the symbol of malevolent animalism, may indeed be considered as a surviving folk-memory of man's prehistoric struggle against possibly very real and material enemies, possibly even, as seems to be suggested by the Beowulf account, against an actual saurian of the fens. Or again, it may typify an ethical conception of man's subjugation of his primitive impulses of sex and hunger in the great process of sociological evolution.

Where Wagner differs essentially from Æschylean tragedy is in his insistence on man's perfectibility as man and by man, and the supreme concept of " The Ring " from an allegorical point of view is the author's insistence on this ethical rather than theistic aspect of human perfectibility. Man is supreme ; the gods may decline, but humanity remains dowered with godlike attributes. Here we have the vital distinction between the optimistic romanticism of " The Ring " and god-ridden pessimism of Æschylean and the classic tragedy. Wotan is the symbol of will—one may almost say of self-will, whereas Brünnhilde, robbed of her godhead, as a result of her challenge to her father's will, is the embodiment of noble self-sacrifice.

" God is will," announce the writers of classic tragedy, with no uncertain voice ; " and man is the pawn of God." " Man is hero and lover," is Wagner's answer, " and the will of God is benighted and broken." The poems of " The Ring " bear ample testimony that Wagner's conception of God (Wotan) in many ways resembled Voltaire's—if God did not exist it would be necessary for man to create him. But Wag-

ner sees God created for a much simpler purpose than Voltaire conceived, as a figure, in short, upon which to drape the legends of mankind. The whole story which is unfolded in the four sections of this great dramatic whole is then the conquest of will by, or rather, its modification to, the demands of heroic love.

Thus we find, to change our ground of comparison, an essential difference between the Siegfried story and the Christ myth, and indeed, between those other aspects of the Redeemer idea found throughout the literature of the world. For Siegfried, the earthly descendant of Wotan, comes bringing both peace and a sword. His very name, "Siegfried" ("conquest-peace"), suggests this dual mission, and it is to be noted that the ancestral sword leads to the discovery of the peace which he brings to the world of men in the form of redemption by love, which itself is only brought to fruition through his own downfall and the greatness of Brünnhilde's loving purpose.

Siegfried again may be taken to represent another branch of the intellectualism of Wagner's time, whose powerful trunk nourished the Nietzschean vision of the Superman. Indeed, there are many points of comparison between Siegfried and the Übermensch. But here again, the dramatist, as he is more human than the theist, is also more humane than the philosopher. For the harsh vitalism of the Nietzschean philosophy is tempered by the warmth and generosity of the great humanitarian. In Siegfried we have the man of the future as Wagner foresaw him, the victim at whiles of perfidy, circumscribed by inscrutable fate, but—and here is the essence of the man—fearless before god, man, and monster, negligent of those evil powers also

at his command, winning by his selfless heroism the rarest understanding of nature and the richest rewards of life.

Nietzsche's Superman with his all-compelling will-to-power, does not then suffice Wagner any more than the mere namby-pamby renunciation of non-resisting Christianity suffices him. And while Wotan's twilit end warns us of the error of a conscious denial of the will, the Siegfried story points the moral that the supreme manifestations of human achievement are to be won only by abnegation and high courage.

# CHAPTER V

## "DAS RHEINGOLD"

THIS first part of the tetralogy of "The Ring" constitutes a general introduction to the drama which, born in the depths of the Rhine, expires in the flames of Siegfried's funeral pyre.

The orchestral prelude is an example of the searching completeness of Wagner's mentality. For the drama begins with a void almost like the void of Genesis, and the spirit of the master-musician moves in the depths of the German river. Out of the watery mother-element came all life, and the prelude of "The Ring" is built up on the simple yet comprehensive motive of the Rhine (1). Given out first of all on the horns, it is taken over by instrument after instrument until the whole orchestra is held in fee to the Rhine, whose musical idea may be recognised as the basis of many of the other important motives which go to make up the melodic material of "The Ring." We seem to see a world coming to birth out of the fructive waters as this great musical progression develops to its lordly climax, and the first scene of the drama opens on the depths of the Rhine.

The thematic material associated with the Rhine and the nixies who guard the gold is of a varied character. Beside the almost philosophical motive of the Rhine itself, which occurs frequently in the course of the four dramas, are met also in this first scene and at various

*DAS RHEINGOLD. Scene* 1. *At the bottom of the Rhine Twilight.*

*The set is built of various shaped, lightly constructed blocks. The water is suggested by filtered light falling across transparent and partly transparent veils drawn taut lengthwise over the stage.*

points as the history develops musical expressions of the flow of the river, a happy and sunny portrayal of the Rhine-flood, and other jocund and graceful strains representative of the simple play of the water-maidens.

In this dim-lit under-world of the river swim the three Rhine-daughters, Wellgunde, Woglinde, and Flosshilde, singing their strange songs :

"Weia ! Waga ! Woge du Welle,
Walle zur Wiege !
Wagala weia.
Wallala weiala weia ! "

(Weia ! Waga ! Wander, ye waters,
Rock ye our cradle !
Wagala weia, etc.)

Laughing and playing their care-free games, they guard the treasure, the Rhinegold, on its rocky pinnacle.

Their pranks are interrupted by the coming of Alberich, a gnome of the Nibelung race, who climbs up from his underground abode, Nibelheim. The characteristic motive associated with Alberich, that of Servitude (2), which is heard whenever these creatures of a lower world appear throughout the four dramas, is first presented here, and its painful simplicity forms a strong contrast with the nobility of, for example, the Walhall-motive or the stimulating heroic themes associated with Gods and Wälsungs.

Alberich, enamoured of the charming nixies, makes love to them all three in turn, but after tantalising the hideous dwarf, they rebuff him. The rising sun illumines the Gold, which glows brilliantly on its rocky bed, its new-found brilliance being heralded by a fanfare (3). The Rhine-daughters break into a joyous pæan of adoration of the gold, of which Alberich does not understand the value until Wellgunde unwisely tells

him : " The world's wealth would be won by the man who out of the Rhinegold fashioned the ring which measureless might would bestow." And Woglinde explains that only he who forswears love can make a ring of the gold, the idea of Renunciation being expressed by a motive (11b).

They plague the dwarf unmercifully, and eventually he climbs to the rocky pinnacle where the gold glows, threatening to quench their light, and then with the terrible imprecation : " Love henceforth do I abjure," tears the gold from the rock and vanishes into the depths. In the darkness the maidens cry out in anguish for their terrible loss, and as the scene is obscured the music changes and seems to transport us upward from the depths of the Rhine to . . .

The second scene, which depicts a rocky mountain-summit. The Ring-motive (4), which has been heard in conjunction with the preceding scene, being particularly stressed when Alberich stole the gold, figures largely in this musical interlude, gradually giving place to the rather similar Walhall-motive (5), one of the noblest themes that has ever been evolved by a musician's imagination. This glorious progression of chords, descriptive of the abode of the gods, reappears often throughout the cycle in various forms and associations until, in the final catastrophe of " Götterdämmerung," it appears disrupted and tragically altered like the divine denizens of the sublime burg which it describes.

Upon this castle, set gloriously above its mountain heights, shine the growing splendours of daybreak. In the foreground is a rocky cliff above the Rhine which flows unseen between the fastness and the nearer flowery meadow where Wotan, the most powerful of

the gods, and Fricka, his wife, lie asleep. The goddess awakes the god who, dreaming, tells how "manhood's honour might now unhindered rise to endless renown." Here we see the suggestion latent in the god's mind expressed in Wotan's first words. But Fricka sharply reminds Wotan of the Compact which he made with the giants in return for their assistance in building Walhall, the splendid pile. This Compact-motive (6) recurs frequently throughout the drama, for by his failure to fulfil his word, Wotan is in part undone, and the Compact is used by Wagner throughout to suggest the delimitations of godhead.

Wotan tells Fricka not to concern herself for the payment, but she bewails the fact that, deaf to her counsels, Wotan had abandoned Freia, goddess of youth and spring, to the giants in order to satisfy his desire for might. She reminds him of how he had neglected the joys of domesticity to indulge in dreams of war, and that these towering walls were built only to enkindle eternal strife. Wotan replies that he cannot forgo wandering and changing love. Fricka taunts him with pitilessly pledging a woman's worth for ambition's sake, and Wotan replies that he pledged one of his own eyes in winning Fricka.

"I worship women more than thou wouldst, and never intended to yield Freia the fair to the giants."

Fricka announces that Freia is coming now for help, and the young goddess enters hurriedly, the motive of Flight (7), of which considerable use is made both in "Rheingold" and in the next opera (in association with the escape of Siegmund and Sieglinde), accompanying her entrance. She tells how Fasolt, one of the giants, threatened her and comes now to take her, but

Wotan derides these threats and asks Freia whether she did not see Loge. At the mention of his name, Fricka expresses her distrust of the cunning god of fire, and his influence on her lord. Wotan explains his association with the fire-god in the significant phrase :

" Where free truth serves, I ask help of none. But when I seek to utilise the spite of enemies, only cunning and guile, as Loge knows them, can help me."

He relies on Loge to redeem his promise to ransom Freia. Freia, in terror at the approach of the giants and feeling herself abandoned by Wotan, calls upon Donner, the god of thunder, and Froh, the god of joy, to help her. Heralded by an ungainly, rough, and simple motive (8), the giants, Fasolt and Fafner, armed with their huge clubs, lumber in, and Fasolt, pointing to the burg, built with his and his brother's prodigious labours, demands payment. Wotan asks what this payment shall be, and Fasolt reminds him that Freia is the price. But Wotan roughly refuses to yield Freia.

" Freia is not for sale," he says.

The giants must consider some other wage. Fasolt is angry at the treachery, and declares that the runes of Wotan's bargains, carved in the shaft of his spear, are a mockery.

" Keep faith in thy bargaining," he warns him. " What thou art, thou art only by treaties."

He warns Wotan furthermore that if the god breaks word with them their alliance is at an end. This long solo of Fasolt's, built up on the twin motives of the Compact and the Convention with the giants, is musically a very fine piece of work, and its dramatic significance is considerable, for in it we are reminded of the spear, the symbol of Wotan's martial might, which,

with the runes carved on its shaft, may be said also to typify the various harassing bargains which limit that power. How the shaft of that spear was won by Wotan is told later, and how it is broken by Siegfried's all-conquering sword, Nothung, in the course of the drama will be seen.

Wotan temporises with the giants and asks them of what use is the beauty and grace of Freia to these dullards. Fasolt points out that the radiant race of gods strove vainly for towers of stone and pledged in return the beauty of woman which they had sweated to win. Fafner, the harsher of the two giants, interposes to point out that they will take away Freia not so much for her beauty as to rob the gods of the Golden Apples which, tended by Freia in her garden, confer immortality upon the race of her brother and sister gods, and without which "wan and pale sinks their bloom, old and weak they decay."

The musical reference to these golden apples, which often recurs, is a singularly beautiful expression of the idea of youth.

The giants are about to drag the goddess away, and Wotan in the absence of the cunning Loge cannot circumvent them, when Froh and Donner intervene and the thunder-god threatens them with his hammer.

"I weigh out your reward in generous measure," Donner boasts as he swings his terrible hammer.

But Wotan thrusts the rune-carved spear-shaft between the combatants. Freia gives herself up for lost, and Fricka reproaches the god when a musical theme like the flicker of flames (9) announces the long overdue advent of the fire-god.

The crafty Loge has a mixed reception from the

assembled company, and Wotan upbraids him for his long delay in coming to enable him to complete an arrangement made at the fire-god's own suggestion. Loge responds with a mockery of the homely desires of Donner and Froh to settle to household joys and wedlock, contrasting this with his own errant inclinations. He says he has found that Fasolt's and Fafner's work in the castle is flawlessly done. Wotan, whom also Loge had mocked for his inclinations towards domesticity, reminds him that he alone had befriended Loge when all the gods were against him, and that he had accepted Loge's word that a ransom should be forthcoming to free the goddess from the giants. But Loge announces the impossibility of finding such a ransom. Fricka blames Wotan for trusting him, and Froh adds :

" Loge thou art named, but I call thee liar (Luge)," to which malignment Donner adds threats.

Again Wotan mediates, asking Loge's counsel. The giants insist on their bargain and Wotan presses Loge to advise him. Then Loge begins a characteristic narration of great interest both as regards its development of the preceding musical ideas and the peculiar mentality which Wagner has ascribed to the lord of fire, with his mischievously malevolent, satiric and yet biddable psychology. The characterisation of Loge is a fine example of the essentially theatrical quality of Wagner's conception, and this solo, together with one appearing later in the scene, is peculiarly expressive and typical of Wagner's skilful handling of what is, after all, only a minor character in the drama.

" In the world's wide zone I sought for a gift so precious that a man would take it in exchange for the

worth and rapture of woman," Loge tells the gods. "Wherever was movement or life, much I sought, queried from all, even where only force stirred and the germ of life quickened, what mankind conceives to be mightier than Woman's wonder and worth. Yet wherever life and a stirring were, in water and earth and air, nothing will forgo love and mate. Yet one I saw who had forsworn love, who for red gold had renounced the loveliness of Woman."

For Loge has learned from the Rhine-daughters of the renunciation of dark Alberich (Nacht Alberich) for the sake of the glistening dross. Loge tells how the Rhine-daughters call on Wotan for vengeance on the Nibelung, and the restitution of their treasure.

"How can I help others who am myself in need of help?" is Wotan's response, but Fasolt and Fafner are intrigued by thought of the gold, and Loge tells them that if the gold were made into a ring it would give measureless might to its possessor. Wotan has heard of the power of the gold, and Fricka, stung by curiosity, asks Loge if it would serve to deck a woman's grace, to which he replies that the ring which busy dwarfs are making in their underground smithy in Nibelheim, would, if worn by a woman, bind her spouse's faith fast to her.

It appears to be in Loge's crafty mind by any means in his power to compel Wotan to wrest the ring from Alberich. But whether this is in order to prevent the dwarf from winning the supremacy which the ring would confer on him, or whether it is that he may become possessed of the gods' power which eventually falls to him by virtue of the maleficent train of events set in motion by the ring, or whether his urgency is

actually dictated by the desire to see the ring and return it to the Rhine-daughters is not absolutely clear. In any case, his Machiavellian strategy persuades both Fricka and Wotan of the need of the latter's possessing the ring. Wotan asks how the ring should be made, and is told: "Only by him who forswears love," and that Alberich has already in fact made the ring.

Donner voices the gods' recognition of the fact that they will all be the slaves of the dwarf. But how to get it?

"By theft!" answers Loge simply. "What a thief stole, steal from the thief. Could a possession be more lightly won?"

But he insists that only by cunning can the ring be restored by Wotan to the Rhine-maidens. Wotan has no intention of returning it to them, and his indifference to their demands is supported by Fricka. Wotan ponders and the giants offer to accept Nibelheim's rosy gold in exchange for the fair one. But Wotan declares that he cannot give what is not his, and they bear off the terrified Freia, and wade across the Rhine with her borne on their shoulders to Riesenheim.

A mist-curtain hides the stage, the gods have indeed begun to shrink and grow old; their immortality, sustained by the golden apples, is waning. Still Wotan broods and the gods await his decision. Froh and Donner are inclined to rescue Freia, but Loge interposes with another of his oddly typical passages, as he describes the ungainly giant leading away the goddess of youth and beauty, and he sarcastically reminds the gods that they are withering for lack of the apples.

"Distraught and pale, how soon ye wither. The light of your countenance dims, quenched is the glance

of your eyes. Cheerily, Froh, now in truth it is dawn (Fruh)"—a gibe at the young god whom Loge despises.

"The hammer falls, Donner, from thy hand. What ails Fricka? Does she rejoice but little on account of Wotan's gloomy greyness that already turns him into a greybeard?"

The gods seem indeed to be perishing for lack of Freia's apples, which perhaps represent one of the beneficent aspects of the gold. Loge in a measure rejoices at the discomfiture of the rest, for Freia had always stinted him of the fruit. They must now meet the giants' wishes, for the giants hold the very lives of the gods, while they hold Freia, in pledge.

"Without the apples, worn, hoary, and grey, shrivelled, mocked of the world, the race of the gods perishes."

At Fricka's angry exhortation, Wotan makes a sudden resolve:

"Come, Loge, down with me! Down to Nibelheim go we together. I will gain the gold."

Loge asks if the Rhine-daughters shall have their will, but Wotan angrily silences him, and avoiding the way of the Rhine, they prepare to depart to the dark realms of the underworld through a sulphur-cleft in the rock. Wotan bids the others await him there. Out of the volcanic cleft pours a sulphurous mist, and the scene appears to sink downward, while the motive of Love-regret (11) associated with Loge (9), is clearly given out several times in a long-drawn-out musical description of the descent into Nibelheim.

Soon we hear the distant sound of the Nibelung forges where the industrious dwarfs are at work, and

as the descent continues this grows louder and louder, the Anvil-motive (12) gradually superseding all other sounds, and the clanging of the Nibelung hammers on several anvils behind the scene followed by reminders of Servitude (2) and the Ring (4) is heard as a ruddy light grows up and the Nibelungs' dark abode is disclosed as the third scene.

Here Alberich, strong in his possession of the ring, is bullying Mime, his brother dwarf, who has tried to trick him out of possession of the wishing-cap, Tarnhelm (illustrated by the motive 13), which Mime has forged on Alberich's instructions. The musical material of the scene which follows consists principally of the motives of Servitude (2), Tarnhelm (13), and the Anvil-motive (12), which is extensively used throughout the Ring Cycle to describe the Nibelungs and their toil. Alberich slips the cap on his head, and, invisible, belabours the miserable thrall. Alberich's Power is signalised by a sombre tragic motive, which, like the motive of the Tarnhelm, which it very closely resembles, save that it is of a more sinister significance, recurs frequently in this opera and throughout the four dramas.

Wotan and Loge appear through a cleft above ; they ask the wretched Mime the cause of his grief. He says he is bondman to his brother, and that the Nibelung smiths, who once worked joyously making pretty trinkets for their wives, are now compelled to creep into caverns and toil incessantly to wrest new wealth and forge it for Alberich to heap up the vast hoard of treasure for himself. Mime tells how he saw a way out of bondage by means of Tarnhelm, since the invisibility it would have conferred on him would have enabled him to steal the ring. Loge assures the dwarf of his and his

fellow's friendship, and the dwarf warns them of Alberich's approach. The latter comes, now visible, with the casque hanging at his girdle, driving with a whip before him out of a nether cleft an army of tiny dwarfs, who pile the golden hoard in front of him. Seeing the visitors, he drives away Mime and the other dwarfs, ordering them to get more gold for him. The motive of the Ring (4) sounds as Alberich draws it from his finger, and the terrified dwarfs scatter to work his will. Mistrustfully Alberich asks the strangers what they seek.

"We have heard strange tales of Nibelheim's benighted realm," says Wotan. "Alberich works mighty wonders. Greed has driven us here to feast on these."

Of such fine guests Alberich knows, he informs them. Loge upbraids his insolence, asking him of what avail would have been his forging had Loge not heated the forge.

"It seems your thanks for that are not kindly."

Alberich's reply is pregnant with allegorical meaning:

"So Loge, the crafty one, now smiles with the light-elves? Art thou, false one, their friend, as once thou wert mine?"

(Here we see clearly the Wagnerian antithesis of the gods, the powers of light, and the dwarfs, the powers of darkness. Also the mercurial character of Loge, ally of both parties for their undoing, is suggested. The language of the original with its Licht*alb*en (light-elves) Nacht-*Alb*erich (Night-Alberich), gives a clearer cue to Wagner's metaphysical meaning than the translation affords. Wotan in some measure may be looked upon as a celestial reflection of the dwarf of the underworld. Both Walhall and Nibelheim contribute their quota to

the inhabitants of the middle world, the race of men, as will be clearly seen when the story develops in its human manifestations.)

Alberich fears not the gods if they have Loge's friendship, which he trusts will undo them, but he feels himself safe because he relies on the untruth of the fire-god. Loge begins to flatter Alberich, and Wotan asks him of what use is the hoard, since it can buy nothing in Nibelheim. The dwarf will collect a great treasure in order that in the end he may win the might of the world, and conquer even the gods themselves.

"As I forswore love, so all that live shall forswear it. Ensnared by gold, only for gold shall you yet yearn. On your splendid heights cradled in joy remain you. In your eternal joyance reck nought of the dark-elves. Yet beware: first your men shall yield to my might, then your beauteous women who disdained my wooing shall be constrained to the dwarf's pleasure, although love smiles not on him. Beware of the hosts of night when the Nibelung hoard rises to daylight out of the dumb depths."

Loge slyly administers more flattery of the dwarf's power, but wonders how Alberich could retain the ring if a robber sought him sleeping. Entrapped by Loge's wily questioning, Alberich reveals that the invisibility which Tarnhelm conferred has relieved him of fears of a thief.

"Without care am I safe even from you, worthy considerate friend."

Loge leads the boastful dwarf on to prove his power, Alberich puts on Tarnhelm, and with the incantation:

"Dragon, coiling wind thyself," changes himself into a terrifying monster, to the accompaniment of the

Dragon-motive (14), a dolorous, simple theme announced by the bass tuba and the contrabass tuba, which recurs throughout the work, not only in connection with Alberich's transformation, but also in relation to Fafner's adoption of the dragon shape. Loge, feigning fear, cries the dragon mercy, but Wotan laughs. Alberich, resuming his own shape, asks the gods if they believe now in his power, and Loge, recovering himself, suggests that it would be too hard for the dragon to make himself as small as he had now made himself big.

" How small shall I be ? " Alberich demands, and at the fire-god's instigation, resumes the helm with the incantation :

" Bent and grey, creep, toad," and reduces himself to such small size.

Wotan puts his foot on the toad and Loge snatches Tarnhelm. The dwarf, changed to his natural shape, is quickly bound hand and foot. The two force the struggling captive to the cleft by which they entered, and whereby they now depart.

The scene changes as before. Again we hear the hammers of the busy dwarfs on their anvils, and various other motives as the upward way is traversed by the two gods and their prisoner. We are now back on the mountainous heights, still encompassed by the dreary mist which fell with the departure of Freia. Wotan and Loge appear through the volcanic cleft :

" Sit thee there, kinsman," says Loge to the bound dwarf.

" There is the world which thou wouldst win for thine own. What corner of it wouldst thou give me for a stall ? "

Alberich threatens, and Wotan demands of him the hoard as a ransom to be paid for his freedom. Thinking that he will be able to retain the ring by yielding up the hoard, Alberich demands that his hands be released, and Loge sets free his right hand. Alberich touches the ring with his lips and summons the Nibelungs to bring up the hoard, which they do, and having piled it, slip away through the cleft once more.

"I have paid," says Alberich. "Now let me go. As for the helmet which Loge holds, now give that back to me in kindness."

But this Loge refuses, and Alberich curses him, swearing to have Mime make another helm. But Wotan will not let him go.

"A golden ring gleams on thy finger: that, elf, I demand, must go with the hoard." The ring too must be a part of the ransom.

"Take my life, but not the ring," whines the dwarf.

"Give me the ring and do with thy life as thou wilt," is Wotan's callous reply.

"But the ring is as much mine as eye and ear," argues Alberich.

Then Wotan angrily reminds him of the theft from the Rhine-daughters, and Alberich accuses him in turn, and taunts him with having dearly desired to commit the same theft, had he but had the craft to forge the ring. It is well for the god, Alberich suggests, that the elf, driven to fury, won the terrible charm by means of his own renunciation, in order that the magic may be used in turn by the gods themselves.

"Beware, overbearing god. If I have sinned, it was against myself, but thou sinnest against all that was, is, and shall be, if thou takest the ring from me."

" The ring," demands Wotan. " Prate as thou wilt, thou canst claim no right in that," and therewith he forces the ring from the finger of his prisoner.

With the words : " Now do I hold what raises me, the mighty one, lord of all might," he puts the ring on his finger.

Loge releases Alberich and bids him begone, and then follows one of the most dramatic passages of this drama, Alberich's terrible Curse of the Ring (15) :

" Thus then let my freedom's first greeting greet thee. As through a curse it came to me, so be this ring accursed. If its gold gave me might without measure, now may its magic mean death to its wearer. No fortune shall delight him : may its bright glow gladden no one. May sorrow sear its possessor and envy gnaw him who hath it not. All shall yearn after its gift, but none shall enjoy its use. Profitless let it be to its owner, yet let it draw murder with it. Devoted to death, let fear enchain the craven so long as he lives ; may he perish longing for death, the ring's lord, lackey of the ring, till in my hands I hold once more the stolen treasure. Thus the Nibelung in direst need blesses his ring. Hold it fast now, guard it well ; from my curse there is no escape."

The song begins with the Curse of the Ring (15) given out in Alberich's own part, and this malevolent-sounding motive is destined to take a large part in the musical ground-work of the subsequent dramas. Alberich disappears into the cavern. Wotan and Loge are untouched by his malediction. The scene clears of its misty obscurity now, for Freia comes again, accompanied by the giants. As the background clears, Fricka, Donner, and Froh can be seen hastening forward. Fricka asks

Wotan whether he brings good tidings, for she sees the hoard which Loge announces is the hard-won ransom.

The giants enter with Freia, and the youth of the gods is renewed. Wotan assures Fasolt the ransom is ready, and the giant demands now that the gold must be so piled up as to hide the maid from his sight. We see, then, that the beauty of woman must be completely obscured by the gold if gold alone is to suffice. They stand their two staves one on each side of Freia and demand that the hoard be heaped between them so as to hide her completely. The gods proceed to pile up the treasure, which Fafner greedily crushes down. Then he espies a cleft, and demands that it be closed. Wotan is enraged at the indignity thrust upon the goddess, and Fricka upbraids him as the cause of this dishonour. Donner threatens Fafner, but Wotan interposes with the suggestion that the pile is now completed. But through the crevice the goddess's hair still shines ; to cover this Tarnhelm must be sacrificed, and it seems that all is well. But Fasolt, overcome by the thought of losing the fair one, steps up and looks through the hoard.

" Ah, still her glance shines to me here ! " he cries. " The star of her eye beams still upon me. While I see this winsome eye, I cannot turn from the woman." (Another reference, this, to the idea insistently handled in this opera, of the overwhelming power of love.)

Fafner demands that this crevice, too, be stopped. On Wotan's finger he sees the gleaming ring, and demands it.

" Be advised ! " cries Loge. " This gold belongs to the Rhine-daughters, and Wotan will return it to them."

Here, however, Wotan announces his determination to hold the ring for himself. Alas for Loge's promise to the Rhine-daughters! Wotan does not consider himself bound by it, and Fafner reasserts himself as the third claimant. But Wotan promises the giant anything he may ask but the ring. Angrily, Fasolt drags Freia out from behind the hoard and prepares to take her away. The gods beg Wotan to reconsider.

"Leave me in peace," cries Wotan; "I will not give the ring!"

And the stage darkens as in a rocky cleft Erda, the earth-mother, the embodiment of natural wisdom and intuition, is seen. She conjures Wotan to yield the ring and escape its curse. She, the all-knowing mother of the three Norns who, like the Parcæ of classic mythology, weave the thread of men's fates, foretells that a darkling day descends on the gods. This song, famed in the concert-hall as in the opera-house as "Erda's Warning," introduces two motives of major importance, one being the Norns (16), and the other the Decline of the Gods (17). It is interesting to note as an example of the intellectual as well as sense-content of Wagner's musical motivation that the Decline of the Gods is practically an inversion of the Norns motive, the underlying idea evidently being that the sisters, spinning their thread, built up the life of the gods, which Wotan's error caused to decline.

Wotan begs Erda for further counsel as she sinks slowly back into the earth, but she will give him no more. Wotan would compel the Wala to tell him more, but is held back by his fellow-gods, who are horrified by his impious intention. Donner calls back the departing giants, promising them the gold. Wotan signs with

his spear that it shall be so, and a reminder of the Compact (6) is sharply announced on the brass. Freia, bought with the gold, shall bring youth again to the gods, and the giants may take the ring, which Wotan throws on to the hoard. Joyously the gods greet their sister, and Fafner packs the hoard into a sack.

But even with their winning of it the ring brings its curse upon the giants. Fasolt demands his share, but Fafner says he will have the larger part, since Fasolt was formerly inclined to rate Freia at more worth than the gold. Fasolt asks the gods to judge. Wotan turns indifferently away, but Loge advises Fasolt to hold fast to the ring. This he attempts to win.

" Mine was it for Freia's glance."

He tries to seize the ring, but is felled by a blow of Fafner's club. The fratricide tears the ring from the dying giant's fingers.

" Now blink for Freia's glance," he says. " Thou shalt look no more on the ring."

The gods are horrified, as is Wotan, on seeing this fatal manifestation of the curse.

" Where is luck like thine ? " says Loge to Wotan. " The winning of the ring meant much to thee, but the loss of it stands thee in better stead, since thy foes destroy one another for the gold thou hast yielded."

Wotan is given over to care, and would find Erda again, but Fricka seeks to lure him to Walhall. Donner points to the mists which obscure the citadel and swings his hammer ; the thunder roars, and he summons the mists about him and vanishes in the storm-clouds he gathers. He calls on Froh to show the gods the way to Walhall over the bridge, a magnificent rainbow which leads across the valley from where the gods stand to

Walhall. The music rises to ecstatic splendour, and at Froh's adjuration to the gods, "Bravely tread its dangerless paths," they prepare to cross the Rainbow Bridge. . . . Wotan has a superb song, which works up to a great climax, a joyous greeting of the citadel, and at this point comes one of the most important and dramatic moments of the drama. Wagner's stage direction for Wotan is: "As if seized by a great idea and very determined," and for the first time is heard the glorious phrase which betokens the Sword (18).

This Sword symbolises the selfless heroism typical of the Wälsung race, and the idea which has seized Wotan is that of creating this new race to lift from the world the Curse of the Ring.

"Thus greet I the burg!" he cries and again the trumpets call this exalting motive.

No words tell of this determination of Wotan's to bring into being this new force of selfless heroism, but the musical idea is eloquent enough.

To reinforce the musical idea, however, it has been the rule with certain producers to cause Wotan to raise aloft at this point a sword, part of the hoard rejected by the giants. This theatrical interpolation, probably due to Wagner himself, certainly clarifies the import of this passage, for it indicates that Wotan possesses the symbol of the selfless courage of the Wälsungs, which is to absolve the world from the treasure's curse.

The close similarity between the Sword (18) and the Curse (15) motives may be taken somewhat as a parallel of the similarity between Light-Alberich and Dark (Night) Alberich, that is, between Wotan and the Nibelung; but it is to be noted that the Sword-motive ends

on a triumphant rising note, whereas the Curse falls, as it were, broken on itself.

Wotan calls on Fricka to follow him to their new abode, and she asks him the meaning of the name Walhall, to which he gives the cryptic reply :

" What my spirit found to master my fear, when conquering it lives, will make it clear to thee."

And while Wotan and Fricka, followed by Freia, Donner, and Froh, cross the Rainbow Bridge into Walhall, the blessed abode, Loge tells us to an accompaniment of his own motive (9), mingled with that of the Ring (4) :

" They hasten to their end who count themselves so strong in their power. I am ashamed to mix with their doings : fancy constrains me to change myself once more into flickering fire to consume them who tamed me once on a while, rather than to pass stupidly with these unforeseeing ones, though they were most godly of the gods."

He goes off, following the gods, while in the invisible vale where the Rhine runs the Rhine-maidens are singing their song of regret, which stops Wotan as he is about to step on to the bridge. He asks what plaints these are, and Loge reminds him of the Rhine-children wailing for the stolen gold. At Wotan's behest, Loge informs the maidens that the gold will no more shine in the depths of the Rhine, but that the maidens henceforth shall bask in the bliss of the newborn splendour of the gods. The gods laugh and pass over the bridge, while the Rhine-maidens tell in regretful cadences how the gold is only steadfast and true in the depths ; while above all who rejoice are false and base. The scene closes on a fluid rhythm similar to that on which the drama opened.

# CHAPTER VI

## "DIE WALKÜRE"

### ACT I

THIS second music drama of "The Ring" cycle is undoubtedly the most universally popular of all four, and the reasons for its just popularity are largely to be sought in the many superlatively lyric passages, and in the breadth of humanity and romance of the story of the unfortunate Siegmund and Sieglinde and the noble Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, who gives her name to the work. "Die Walküre" is storm-begotten, for the overture describes with rich musical resource the storm through which Siegmund, the Wälsung, is fleeing from his enemies. Built up primarily on the Storm-motive, with occasional references to the Thunder-motive, the eloquent orchestration seems to lash us with the intemperate powers of Nature.

The rising curtain discloses the interior of a dwelling built round a huge ash, whose fierce roots convolve in the earth floor. The log walls of the simple dwelling are broken at the back by a door opening on to the woodland, and at one side by a hearth, while on the other side a few steps lead up to another door giving into an inner apartment. The fleeing Siegmund, overcome with fatigue, breaks into the room, and is seen to be weaponless and forespent.

"No matter whose hearth this be, here must I rest."

He throws himself on the couch of skins by the fire, and remains there motionless while the orchestra gives out the motive of Siegmund's Weariness, which is soon followed by an exquisite phrase descriptive of Sieglinde's Compassion for the broken stranger, for the mistress of the house has come from the inner room, and, receiving no answer to her questions, she approaches the exhausted guest, who begs her for water. As he hands her back the drinking-horn, his glance is held long, for the brother and sister Wälsung recognise one another, and their racial origin is expressed orchestrally by the Wälsung motive (19). The love of the Wälsung pair, which develops from this moment on, is expressed by a motive of Love (20), which is associated with a somewhat different rendering of the Flight-motive (7) which we have noted in the former drama. In addition to the Wälsung-motive (19) is that of Wälsung Heroism (21), of which a considerable use is made in connection with Siegmund, and which reappears as an attribute of his son, Siegfried, in both the following dramas.

"Whose house is this?" Siegmund asks.

"This house and this woman are Hunding's own," Sieglinde replies. "He will grant thee hospitable rest. Tarry till he comes home."

But Siegmund will not stay. He tells how his weapons were broken, how his enemies pursued him and the storm wore him down. Now the sun shines anew; he will go on. Sieglinde gives him a cup of mead, and at his invitation she herself sips. Siegmund drinks, and as he hands back the cup to her they look at one another with growing compulsion, and he tells her that she has

nourished one of evil destiny: he will take himself away. She asks him who pursues him that he still flees.

"Ill-fortune follows me wherever I flee," he replies, "and ill-luck approaches wheresoever I yearn. May it stay far from thee, woman, for now I turn away my feet and my glance."

But Sieglinde will not let him go. "Stay here," she cries after him; "thou canst not bring evil here into the house where evil dwells!"

Troubled, Siegmund returns to the hearth and agrees to await Hunding's coming. Already the latter can be heard leading his horse to the stable without, and in a moment he enters, his presence being announced by the harsh and distinctive Hunding motive. Sieglinde explains that she found the guest whom need had driven to their hearth and tended his wants.

"For shelter and drink I thank thee. Wilt thou blame thy wife for granting them?" asks Siegmund, to which Hunding replies with the formula of the guest-law:

"Holy is my hearth; holy be my house to thee," as he lays aside his weapons and bids Sieglinde bring food.

Sieglinde's husband is struck by the similarity of feature between his wife and his guest. "The glittering dragon shines also in his eye," Hunding notes. (This dragonseen in the eye is one of the mythological signs of the heroic race.) But he hides his mistrust, and he asks his guest to tell him of his adventure.

"Through wood and mead, heath and copse, storm and fierce necessity pursued me. I know not the way which I came; whither I go I know still less. Fain would I learn of this."

Hunding tells him he is safe in his house and that,

when he leaves it, he can go westward, where in a rich hall his kin dwell; but he would be honoured to know the name of his guest. As they sit at the table, Hunding watches the pensive Siegmund and sees how closely Sieglinde observes him. Pressed by them both, Siegmund relates the Wälsung Odyssey:

"I ought not to be called Friedmund [or "Peaceable-tongue," the name which he assumes]; I would willingly be called Frohwalt ["Joy-bringer"], but I must call myself Wehwalt ["Woe-bearer"]. Wolf ["Wälse"] was my father, and two of us were born together, a twin sister and myself. I seem to remember the mother who bore me, and her with whom she hid me, but I scarcely knew them. Wolf was redoubtable and had many enemies." Once after a hunt the boy and the old man returned to find the Wolf's lair empty, its roof-tree burnt to a stump, the hall destroyed, the mother dead, and all trace of the daughter lost. The Neidings had done this, and still for long after hunted the Wolf pair.

"A Wolfing tells thee this," he says to Hunding, "whom many knew as Wolfing."

Hunding expresses his surprise at the story, and has heard dark tales of the pair, but he knows not Wolf nor Wolfing.

"Where is thy father now?" asks Sieglinde.

Siegmund relates how the Neidings hunted them, and how once he was parted from his father and heard no more of him, and thereafter ill-luck dogged him, wherefore he calls himself "Wehwalt." Hunding is uneasy at having such a guest in his house, but Sieglinde upbraids him. How did he lose his weapons, she asks. In vainly defending a maiden who called upon him for

aid, he informs her. Hunding angrily explains that he was called to that same fray to take revenge for the blood of his kindred, and now comes home to find the fleeing outlaw at his own fireside.

" My house shall shield thee to-night, Wolfing," he says. " To-morrow we must fight, and thy death shall be my due."

He orders his wife to follow him into their bedchamber. With a long yearning glance Sieglinde looks at the trunk of the roof-tree, and Hunding, seeing her look, sends her into the room with the drink-horn and the light. He takes his weapons from the tree and follows her, with a last admonishment and warning to his guest. Left alone in the darkness, lit only by the fitful glimmer of the dull fire, Siegmund lies down on the couch and broods, and here follows one of the great lyric passages which endear " Die Walküre " to countless thousands throughout the world. Scarce is the menace of Hunding's presence, so darkly expressed by his motive, lifted—while, indeed, its monotonous theme is still heard in the orchestra—when the Sword-motive (18) appears in the lower registers of the wind.

" My father promised me a sword, which I should find in my direst need," broods Siegmund. " Where is this conquering sword ? "

The firelight shines on the trunk of the ash-tree, where is seen the hilt of a sword whose blade is buried deep in the tree. The bright gleam reminds him of Sieglinde's glance, for her presence had made all things glorious, and as he ruminates the Sword-motive (18) sweeps several times through the orchestra with gathering intensity and fire. Sieglinde comes in softly from the bedchamber, where she has left Hunding drugged,

and tells him of the sword which shall save him, which only the strongest of warriors can win. A blue-clad greybeard, whose overhanging hat covered his one eye, came once when Hunding's marriage-feast called together his kinsmen on the occasion of his wedding an unwilling bride. He looked kindly on Sieglinde, but on the rest his glance was terrible. The old man had then thrust a sword into the tree; many had tried to wrest the steel, but none had succeeded. Sieglinde had known then that he who gained the sword which the sorrowful one had left would be the blessed friend who would revenge her and regain for her all she had lost, and win for her all she had bewailed. Siegmund embraces her, delighted to have found weapon and wife in one. In ecstasy he claims his love with a wonderfully dramatic and significant motivation. The author makes Sieglinde break free with the frightened cry:

"Who passes? Who came in?"

For the door has mysteriously opened on the glorious spring night, whose full moon brilliantly lightens the chamber.

"No one passed," cries Siegmund; "yet one has come, for, see, Spring laughs in this room." And drawing her gently to him on the couch, he gives voice in music unsurpassed in the whole of Wagnerian creation to his welcome of the spring night, an unexcelled epithalamium of delight.

"The young pair greet each other in ecstasy:

"Love and the Spring are at one."

The most effective use is made in this song of the Love-motive (20) and of another phrase descriptive of the praise of Spring. Remembrance and recognition flood the lovers' hearts, and thoughts of the greybeard

sorrowful one (Wotan), their father, soon remind them of the sword.

"Art thou truly called Wehwalt?" asks Sieglinde.

"Not since thou lovest me," the hero answers.

"Nor Friedmund?"

"Call me what thou wilt—so am I called."

"Wälse was thy father, and thou art a Wälsung. For thee he left the sword in the tree. Siegmund—so will I call thee."

Siegmund joyously accepts his new name (Voice of Victory), springs to the tree-trunk, and seizes the sword.

"Siegmund am I called, and Siegmund I am. Witness this sword, which I seize without fear." And as it comes to him in his direst need (Not), he christens it "Nothung." With a terrific effort he drags it from the ash-bole, the Sword theme (18) being delivered triumphantly by the orchestra.

"Seest thou, wife, Siegmund the Wälsung? As a bridal gift he brings thee this sword. Thus for himself frees he thee, most blessed among women. From the house of the foe he leads thee forth. Follow him afar into the laughing habitation of Spring."

The curtain falls quickly on the exultant embraces of the pair, the music rising to a tremendous climax wherein are included the motives of the Sword, Wälsung heroism, Flight, Spring, and Love, and the painful suggestion of Servitude.

## Act II

The overture to the second act, like that of the first act, is a lively quick-moving progression which, em-

ploying the Sword-motive (18) in an unusual time, sweeps into the Flight-motive (7), also in a changed form, and soon takes up a new theme, the familiar motive of the Valkyries' Ride (22), with which is associated another Valkyrie motive, that of the Cry. Both motives, but especially the Ride, are found in association with Brünnhilde throughout the course of the dramas.

The curtain rising discloses a rocky place from which, in the background, rises sharply the rugged pass. Here are discovered Brünnhilde and Wotan, both armed for the fray.

Brünnhilde, the heroine of the Ring, is chief of the Valkyrie Maidens (Wal-küren, archaic German for "Fray-chooser"), nine daughters of Wotan begotten by the god on the occasion of his visit to Erda, the Earth-mother, the goddess of intuition. The function of these maidens is a protective one, for they have been called into being by the divine will and divine wisdom to protect Walhall from the curse of the ring. To aid them in this protective office, they bear from the field of battle the spirits of heroes slain in the fray. Brünnhilde, whose character is a rich amalgam of the originality and daring of Wotan with the tenderness and intuitive graces of her mother, is the best-beloved daughter of Wotan, who has come to look upon her as the principal agent of his will. In this way he has called upon her now to take a hand in saving the Wälsung race in the persons of the flying Siegmund and Sieglinde, from the ill-fortune which dogs the lovers, his earthly children.

Briskly Wotan orders Brünnhilde to bridle her horse, Grane, and hasten to aid the Wälsung.

"Let Hunding go where he belongs; he is not fit for Walhall."

Joyously Brünnhilde leaps from rock to rock, to the highest peak, crying her strange Valkyrie theme. From her high post of vantage she espies Fricka wildly driving her ram-drawn chariot as she comes to expostulate with her erring lord. Brünnhilde mercilessly taunts Wotan with the trouble that is brewing for him:

"See how she wields her golden scourge. The poor brutes groan with fear; the wheels rattle wildly; angrily she fares to the brawl. In such a strife I share unwillingly, though mankind's battles delight me," and her song ends with a high-spirited repetition of her exultant cry as she disappears from the mountain to do the god's behest.

Fricka descends from her car to accuse her spouse of having hidden away from her. Her entrance is marked by a repetition of the Servitude-motive (2), suggestive both of the conventional mentality of the goddess and of the bondage which enthralls the god. And during their long debate we are reminded of Freia, the Sword (18), Ring (4), and of Wotan's bargain with the giants. Hunding has called for vengeance to Fricka, and she, as the goddess of wedlock, has sworn to punish the sinning pair, his escaping wife and Siegmund, her lover. Wotan shows his sympathy with the lovers whom Spring joined in love; he considers that they have done no wrong, and significantly points out that where love rules he rules not.

"I hold that bond unholy which constrains unloving ones in union," and he asks Fricka not to expect him to compel by force what withstands her power. "For where bold spirits arise, there I ever advise strife."

Fricka refers to the incestuous love of brother and sister: "When was ever such union known?" she asks.

" Thou hast known it to-day," replies Wotan. " It is clear that they love one another; then bless them in their union."

" Since thou didst create the wilful Wälsungs, all is at an end with the gods," Fricka laments—in unconscious prophecy.

She foresees that the bold twins, born of Wotan's falseness, will be the cause of Walhall's downfall, and upbraids the god for his ever-changing desires, and regrets to see him make for the fray together with the Valkyries, other fruit of his lawless love. But since taking the name of the wolfish Wälse, he has fallen into an even deeper disgrace, that of creating a pair of mean mortals :

" Now complete the work, fill full the cup, trample me, the betrayed one, beneath thy feet."

Wotan's answer is a quiet accusation of Fricka's inability to comprehend what she has not yet experienced, and an explanation of his own creative willing of the unwonted. He reaffirms the need of the race of gods for a hero who would break the spell of the ring, free of godhead's commands. This is, of course, the destiny of the Wälsung which is to be accomplished by the fearless Siegfried in due course. No god, Wotan points out, might achieve this, owing to the gods' very nature. Fricka is incapable of understanding this, and chides Wotan for suggesting that the race of heroes could possess any attribute denied to the gods to make possible heroes' deeds, to which Wotan's reply is an indication of the free spirit of heroism. But Fricka denies that this exists save insomuch as they are emboldened by Wotan's protection : she assures him that he shall not save this Wälsung, who seems to her only an aspect of Wo-

tan's erring will. Wotan points out that Siegmund strove on his own account. If that is so, Fricka answers, Wotan must take back again the magically-strong sword which the god conferred on his son.

" Siegmund won it himself in his need," cries Wotan.

" Thou didst create the need and the conquering sword, and now wouldst deceive me, who day and night have followed thee, and wouldst consider the hero more than thy eternal wife. Not thus may a goddess be shamed."

Wotan's Anger, expressed by a deep and brooding motive (23), gives place now to gloomy and reluctant acquiescence. He will not shield the Wälsung. Nor shall Brünnhilde, Fricka demands : let him call back the Valkyrie and order Siegmund's death. After an inward struggle, Wotan protests that he cannot overthrow the hero who found his sword. Then let him withdraw its magical properties, suggests Fricka. On Fricka's insistence, he takes the oath that the Wälsung shall be sacrificed, and thus the struggles of the god to save Walhall and his fellows from ruin are overcome by the insistent virtue of the conventional goddess. The Warrior-maid, Brünnhilde, returning, is met by the indignant and victorious Fricka, who announces :

" The father of war tarries for thee. Let him tell thee how he has decided the lot."

Therewith Fricka remounts her chariot and drives quickly away. Brünnhilde sees from Wotan's pensive gloom that the strife between husband and wife has gone ill for the former. She asks him the cause of his woe, and he replies in a burst of despair which grows gradually to terrific anger as the scene between Wotan and Brünnhilde progresses. This scene largely employs

the essential notes of the Rage-motive (23), but with it is also used a typical theme illustrative of the Gods' Distress (24), and Wotan's renunciation of happiness as opposed to Alberich's renunciation of love seems to be suggested by a repetitive use of a theme very similar to the Renunciation-motive (11b). Brünnhilde beseeches Wotan to tell her everything, and with the brutal announcement of the Curse-motive (15) in the orchestra, Wotan asks :

" If now I tell, shall I not loosen the grasp of my will ? "

" What am I, if not thy will ? " is Brünnhilde's reply.

Wotan then explains to his beloved daughter how, when youthful love's delight had waned, pressed by wandering wishes, he won the world, and bound by bargains the errors brought on by his falseness, yet still longed for love. Winning the ring which Alberich had stolen by means of his abnegation, he denied it to the Rhine-daughters. Seeking tidings of the Wala, Erda, he found none, but returned and, by love's enchantment, forced her to speak, and of their union were born Brünnhilde and her eight sisters, to defend the gods from the doom which the Wala foretold. With their protection and that of the heroes whom they brought to Walhall, Wotan does not fear Nibelheim's darkling hordes—yet if the ring were won by Alberich, Walhall would fall, since only he who forswears love (which Wotan can never do) may use the runes of the ring to the eternal shame of the gods, and turn the heroes against Wotan. Therefore Wotan must contrive that the ring be taken once more from Fafner, to whom it was paid, but the compact prevents Wotan from assailing the dragon-giant. The god is bondman to his own

bargains. Yet an unknown hero, unhelped by the god, might do what Wotan cannot, and such a hero, striving against Wotan as a friendly foe, would prevail in the god's behalf. But how is he to find such a dear defier, how fashion that other one who, by his own will, unaided, shall yet promote the god's will? Never, it seems, shall he find the free one, who must be self-created, since Wotan can only create bondmen. The Wälsung, Siegmund, had been stirred against the gods by Wotan, and guarded by Wotan's sword. But Fricka easily saw through this cunning, and now the god must do her will. The curse of the ring lies heavy on Wotan because of his greed for the gold, and now he must slay him whom most he cherishes.

"Farewell, then, noblest splendour, glory of godhead. Let all which I built crash in ruins. I surrender my task. Only one thing more remains for me to make —downfall."

In this scene between father and child, which musically is one of the most complex and noble of all, we are introduced once more to the Walhall-motive (5), but the Walhall theme here wears its splendour with a difference, a difference which suggests the crumbling destruction to which the godly resort is destined by Wotan's gold-greediness, his wandering wilfulness, and his bargaining. Now he realises the sense of the threat uttered by the Wala:

"When the darksome foe of love creates in rage a son, the end of the gods is not long to wait." And Wotan has heard that through the gold the dwarf has won a wife, and that a child is to be born to the loveless one.

"Yet I, who rejoiced in love, might never win the free hero." In a terrible blessing, which more resembles

a curse, Wotan wrathfully proclaims : " Nibelung-son, take my blessing. I give thee for a legacy what I myself loathed so deeply, the bootless glory of godhead : consume thyself with yearning envy."

(This heritage is bestowed upon Hagen, son of Grimmhilde and Alberich, whose dark mission in this drama will be made apparent in the fourth part of the Ring cycle.)

Brünnhilde, terrified by this double-edged blessing, asks what she may do, and Wotan bids her to make manifest Fricka's will, since his own wishes are so futile. Brünnhilde pleads with him to save the Wälsung, but Wotan orders her to slay him. Then the Valkyrie, full of that tenderness for the Wälsung which Wotan has implanted in her, defies the god. In great rage and self-scorn, Wotan sternly warns her to obey him. We hear the suggestions of his love and regret, but anger dominates all, and with a last reminder of her task Wotan leaves the Valkyrie overcome and bewildered by the war-father's ire. The Walküre-motive is heard in sad reminiscence here as she takes up her shield and spear. She feels her weapons, once so light in her hands, weigh heavily now that she is destined to an evil fray.

" Alas ! my Wälsung, in the height of grief, I, the true one, must falsely forsake thee."

Brünnhilde's tender brooding, eloquently told by the orchestra, is interrupted by the Flight-theme (7) as up the valley come Siegmund and Sieglinde ; Brünnhilde watches them a moment, then goes into the cavern where her steed, Grane, awaits her.

Sieglinde is pressing rapidly ahead of her lover, who strives to restrain her in order that she may rest awhile in her flight from Hunding, which the Flight-motive (7)

emphasises. She is almost mad with the fear of her husband's vengeance, and scarcely seems to understand Siegmund's objurations to her to stay. The Love-motive (20), reminiscent of the delight of the former scene, accompanies Siegmund's embrace and persuasion, and with growing rapture she throws herself into his arms to the accompaniment of impetuously passionate orchestration. But again the Flight-motive interposes, as she cries :

"Away, away! Fly the profaned one. My arm caresses thee unlawfully. Dishonoured and shamed, this body is dead; flee from the corpse; touch it no more. May the wind bear away the dishonoured one who gave herself to the hero."

Sieglinde, in her half-madness, recalls her surrender to Siegmund, and the dishonour of her former yielding to Hunding. She begs Siegmund to leave her, accursed, dishonoured, for she must never give herself to him, since thus shame would fall on her brother and harm on her rescuer. Siegmund will hear nought of this : he is prepared to pay the price of whatever shame has been wrought. He counsels that they wait here for their foe, who must fall to Nothung's sharp edge, and thus vengeance for the bride shall be wrought. Sieglinde leaps up :

"List! Dost thou not hear the horns calling? All around resounds their angry clamour. From wood and valley they shriek to us."

The terrible insistence of the Hunding-motive and the belling of dogs accompany her hysterical panic, as she tells how Hunding has wakened and called together his kinsmen and his bloodhounds, which are now baying to the sky for the breach of wedlock's oath. It seems to

her that Siegmund is no longer with her, and she calls upon her radiant brother not to take from her the light of his eyes nor to disdain her kiss. Her delirium rises to a frenzy of terror: she begs Siegmund to throw away the sword, which will be useless against her former lord's hounds. And here we are faced by another example of the profound symbolism of the Wagnerian creation, for in her unreasoning intuitiveness Sieglinde seems to glimpse the fact that Siegmund must be saved by his own prowess and not by Wotan's protection (the sword). This is an aspect of the myth which no editors seem to have noted, but it must be remarked that in the unconsciousness of terror Sieglinde re-echoes Wotan's own thought, that the hero must depend for his safety upon his own personal resources. It should also be recalled that Wagner stresses throughout the value of intuitional as opposed to deliberate thought, so that Sieglinde's cry to Siegmund in some way resembles the advice of the goddess of intuition, Erda, to Wotan himself.

"Siegmund," cries his demented love, "there I see thee, ghastly sight. The dogs snatch at thy flesh with their teeth, recking nothing of thy noble glance; their firm jaws close on thy feet: thy sword is splintered. The great ash-tree falls; its trunk is broken," and with a final cry to her brother she falls swooning in his arms.

(This mention of the ash-tree, made by Sieglinde in her almost senseless ecstasy, may be taken as a reference, a sort of unconscious memory of the ash-tree which was the roof-tree of Hunding's house. But it has also a deeper significance, for it must be recalled that Wotan's spear-shaft was a branch of the world's ash, Yggdrasil, which flourished above the spring of wisdom guarded

by the Norns from which the god drank and so won wisdom, for which he paid the price of an eye. It may be stretching the mythology far to infer that Sieglinde's incoherent ravings may be taken to suggest this double connection, but the comprehensiveness of Wagner's symbology would seem to warrant this assumption.)

Tenderly Siegmund lets the woman sink to the ground, and tenderly he kisses her, as the Love-motive (20) sweetly hints at the emotions that stir his noble heart. Then as he bends over her, the music changes, and the solemn theme of Fate (25) is taken up by the orchestra, while Brünnhilde, leading Grane by the bridle, comes out of the cave and gazes on Siegmund. As she looks at him, we hear the lyric theme of Death, which reappears at the end of this opera, and the two themes are united in the scene which follows. As the Valkyrie sadly notes the hero, we have a soft reminiscence of the Walhall motive (5).

Siegmund, in answer to Brünnhilde's adjuration: "Look upon me; I am she whom soon thou must follow," raises his eyes to her face, asks: "Who art thou? Say who gazes on me so lovely and so stern," and again the Fate-motive (25) is heard as Brünnhilde announces: "Only to the death-doomed turns my glance. He who sees me departs from the light of life."

Again the orchestra speaks of Walhall, to which abode Brünnhilde will bear the hero. This motive is repeated several times with growing power and beauty, as Brünnhilde explains her mission. Then the Death-theme recurs in conjunction with the Fate-motive (25) as Siegmund earnestly scans the Valkyrie's face, and asks where she would take him if he followed her.

"To Wotan, who has required thee, I lead thee.

Follow me to Walhall." There he will find the noble band of heroes who will greet their fellow with splendid welcome.

"Shall I find Wälse there?" he asks, "and will a woman greet me joyously there?"

Brünnhilde assures him that the wish-maidens will wait on him, and Wotan's daughter will be his cup-bearer. Siegmund recognises her as Wotan's daughter, and asks her:

"Does my sister-bride accompany her brother? Shall Siegmund caress Sieglinde there?"

But Brünnhilde sorrowfully tells him that Sieglinde must wait on earth.

"Then greet Walhall for me," cries Siegmund; "greet Wotan, greet Wälse, and the heroic band; greet too the lovely wish-maidens—I go not with thee to them."

Brünnhilde admonishes him: "Thou hast seen the Valkyrie's withering glance; now thou must go with her."

But Siegmund defies her, swearing that he will remain with Sieglinde in weal or in woe. "Thy glance cannot make me quail, nor compel me to go."

Brünnhilde then menaces him: "Death shall compel thee, fool," she cries; "I came hither to warn thee."

"Where then is the hero by whose hand to-day I must fall?"

And when Brünnhilde tells him it is by Hunding's hand, the hero mocks, for it needs a stronger hand than Hunding's to vanquish him. If she lurks here longing for strife, let her choose the Neiding for her prey, for Siegmund predicts that Hunding will fall. Brünnhilde

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shakes her head; Fate has decreed Siegmund's death. But the Wälsung relies upon Nothung, the sword which gives him security, which makes him adamant against her threats. Brünnhilde sharply informs him that Wotan has taken the spell from the sword, and decreed the death of its bearer.

"Silence," cries Siegmund angrily, "affright not the slumberer," and with overwhelming grief the hero bends tenderly over Sieglinde bewailing the fate which now he knows impends, and which compels him, instead of shielding her, to betray her in the coming fight.

"O, shame to him who gave me the sword and now allots to me disgrace instead of victory. If I must fall, to Walhall I will not go; let Hella claim me."

His tremendous abnegation touches Brünnhilde, for she sees that he cares nothing for the eternal joys, and holds nothing of so much worth as the hapless woman in his arms. Siegmund upbraids her for her cruelty, and bids her, since she comes only to mock him, take herself away.

"Yet if thou dost gloat on my distress, relish now my woe to the full. Let my need nourish thy envious heart, but of Walhall's empty glory boast not indeed to me."

Brünnhilde's determination born unwillingly of her father's command begins to break, and here we meet again that almost human tenderness which in the end is destined to rob the warrior-maiden of her godhead. The music suggests that she is infected by the Wälsung's temerity in the face of death, for the death-theme in the words which follow is given out almost joyously, and changes into a suggestion of the Love-rapture (20) as she tells him that she recognises the necessity which

gnaws at his heart and feels the hero's holy grief. She takes the great resolve to defy her father with the words :

" Entrust to me thy wife ; my safeguard shall shield her fast."

Siegmund scorns any safeguard for his wife but his own prowess : if he is to die he will slay his beloved forthwith. Brünnhilde cries to him to entrust the woman to her for the sake of the pledge which she received from him in their rapture, and we hear in the orchestra a restatement of the theme of the praise of Spring reminding us of the night on which Siegfried was conceived. But Siegmund draws Nothung, and in an ecstasy of determined heroism, admirably expressed by impetuous descending triplets culminating in the Sword-motive (18), declares :

" This sword which a traitor bestowed upon a true heart, this sword which cowardly deceives me in the face of my foe, though it serves me not against enemy, shall serve me right well against friend." Then as he menaces Sieglinde with the sword, " Nothung, greedy steel," he cries, " two lives now laugh to thee ; take them, greedy steel, in one blow."

His determination infects the Valkyrie : she decides that Sieglinde shall live and promises Siegmund life with her. The death-doom is recalled, for she will help Siegmund to joy and conquest. The horn-cries are heard afar by the Valkyrie, and she bids Siegmund prepare for the fray in which Nothung shall not fail him and her protection shall shield him. Siegmund watches her disappear with Grane, and with growing contentment makes ready to receive Hunding's attack. There follows a deliciously tender song, as he comforts his

sleeping love. The stage has become dark, for in the background heavy storm-clouds have hidden the distance; horn-calls are heard in all directions preceding the advent of Hunding. The interposition of this beautiful lyric mood is typical of Wagner's remarkable sense both of dramatic contrast and of the simple heroism of the Wälsung.

"Sleep with magical power charms away the pain and grief of the fair one. Can it be that the Valkyrie coming brought this blissful respite? Our terrible battle would surely frighten my sorrowful bride. A smiling dream now soothes her who lives though she seems lifeless."

Gently he lays her down and kisses her, and as again the horn-call is heard, he cries his challenge to Hunding.

"Let him who calls me there prepare; I am ready to pay him his due, and Nothung shall count out the price."

Therewith he departs in search of his enemy. Sieglinde, dreaming, recalls the tragedy of her extreme youth:

"Would that my father would come home, but he still wanders in the forest. Mother, mother! I am terrified. These strangers seem unfriendly and ill-disposed. Black clouds, heavy vapours, fiery flames lick at us now; the house is afire! Rescue, brother," and with the cry: "Siegmund, Siegmund," she awakes in the midst of the tempest which roars around her.

Still the horn-calls are growing in intensity from all sides, and now Hunding's voice can be heard challenging Wehwalt to the fray, while Siegmund's care-free call to the Neiding to stand and fight answers him. Hunding warns Siegmund of Fricka's revenge, but

Siegmund bids him threaten him not with women but fight himself lest the goddess of wedlock fail him.

"For see," he cries, "from the very roof-tree of thy house fearlessly I drew the sword, and now thou shalt taste its edge," and the trumpet barks out the Sword-motive (18).

Sieglinde by a flash of lightning perceives that the warriors are now engaged, and rushes to the pass crying out that they shall kill her first, but a terrific lightning flash almost blinds her. In its glare may be seen Brünnhilde floating above Siegmund, covering him with her shield and encouraging him to strike Hunding with his trusty blade. But even as the hero is aiming the fatal blow at the Neiding, a ruddy glow appears in which Wotan is seen, protecting Hunding with his spear as he cries:

"Back from the spear; let the sword be shattered." The Compact-motive (6) emphasises the completion of the god's promise to Fricka.

Brünnhilde, terrified, withdraws. Nothung is broken on the spear, and Hunding wounds Siegmund mortally, and the Servitude-motive (2) supervenes to give place to the theme of Wälsung Heroism (21), which, in turn, yields to Fate (25). The clouds engulf the scene once more. Out of the darkness Brünnhilde hastens to Sieglinde, snatches her on to her horse, and disappears with her, a modified version of the Ride-theme (22) telling of her departure. The clouds disperse to the accompaniment of the Fate-motive (25), and Hunding is seen drawing his sword from Siegmund's lifeless body, on which Wotan from a rocky pinnacle looks mournfully down.

"Hence, base one," he cries. "Kneel to Fricka; tell

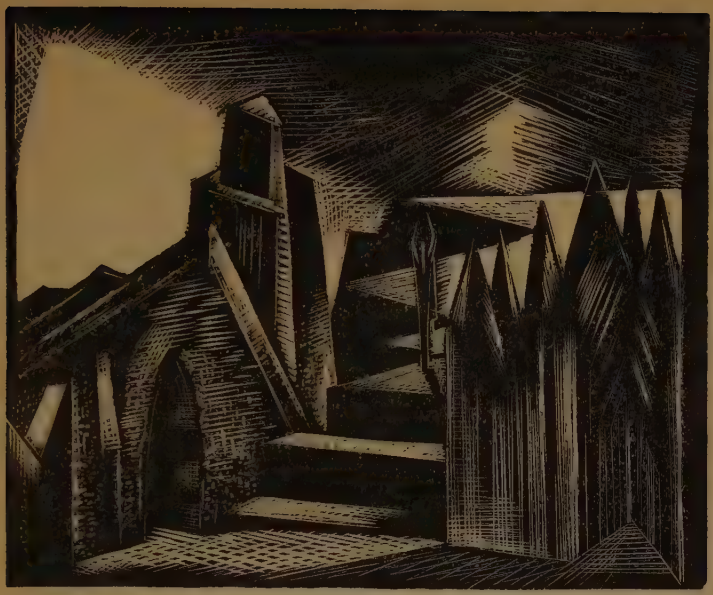
her that Wotan's spear avenged what once mocked her," and again the Compact-motive (6) drones out on the 'cellos and double-basses. " Go," cries Wotan, and before the god's contemptuous glare, Hunding sinks dead to the ground. The Rage-motive (23) announces the change in the mood of the god, who now cries : " Woe to Brünnhilde, the rebel. Terrible shall be her punishment if my steed overtake her as she flees," and amid thunder and lightning, Wotan hastens away as the orchestra develops the idea of the Gods' Distress (24), and this scene of intermingled savagery and lyric charm ends with these two motives, supported by doleful suggestions of that unhappy Servitude (2) which is the heritage alike of god and Nibelung.

## Act III

The overture to the third act of " Die Walküre " is justly famous wherever orchestral or military band music is played throughout the world, and represents perhaps the most familiar excerpt from Wagner's master-concept, " The Ring." Its tremendous volcanic energy, its savagery, and the prodigality alike of its orchestration and of the composer's genius are in no way better exemplified than in this almost frantic and quite overwhelming prelude. Built up almost entirely on the motives of the Ride (22) and the Valkyries' Cry, it cumulates from the wild activity of its beginning into a frenzied, yet ordered, chaos (for only by contraries does it proceed), in which the wild laughter and inharmonious yells of the nine divine maidens, storm-riding guardians of Walhall, are blended in majestic madness.

*DIE WALKURE. Act 3. The Valkyrie's Home.*

*On the right a pinewood encloses the stage. On the left the entrance to a cave. At the back rocks of various heights form a parapet to a precipice. A rocky peak dominates the scene. In this, as in the preceding and the following scene, lightly built solids form the set. A luminous concave back-cloth is the main source of light.*



The scene disclosed is a rocky mountain summit, on one side of which is the entrance to a cave, while across the other side of the stage runs a pine-wood. Precipitous rocks in the background suggest the steep heights of an escarpment surmounted by this scene, and above the cave is the highest peak of all. Upon this are four of the Valkyries, fully armed; they are Gerhilde, Ortlinde, Waltraute, and Schwertleite, who, with their sisters, Helmwige, Siegrune, Grimgerde, and Rossweisse, and of course Brünnhilde, are the nine daughters of the Wala, Erda, born of Wotan's constraining embraces.

The names of these Valkyries would seem to suggest that deeper aspect of the myth, one might say of the Nature-myth, inherent in Wagner's underlying theses. Brünnhilde's name, for example, serves as the basis of a pun made by Wotan later, when he speaks of bestowing upon her the birny (Brünne). Gerhilde's name, again, refers to the spear (Ger = a spear); Schwertleite signifies "director of the sword"; Waltraute, "entrusted with strife"; Siegrune, "the runes of victory"; Rossweisse, "the whiteness of the steed"; Helmwige, "the warrior's helm"; Grimgerde, "spear fury"; but these are mere implications upon which an exact significance must not be enforced.

Gerhilde, from the pinnacle, gives voice to the Valkyries' cry: "Ho-jo-to-ho, heia!" and calls Helmwige to her as in a lightning flash one of the Valkyries may be seen riding the storm-clouds on her steed and bearing across the crupper the body of a hero slain in battle. The Valkyries yell their wild greeting. They discuss the bestowal of the various heroes that they bring, and one by one the maidens tether their steeds and then gather on the stage. "Now we are eight,"

says Helmwige; "still one is lacking," and Gerhilde replies: "Brünnhilde still remains at the side of the brown-eyed Wälsung." "War-father would give us furious greeting if he saw us return without her; let us then tarry here for her," advises Waltraute. But Siegrune sees Brünnhilde riding madly towards them, and the maidens rush to the peak and encourage Brünnhilde with their cries, commenting on her reckless haste. They observe that she brings a woman upon her saddle, and that she does not answer their greetings. Gerhilde and Helmwige hasten to the wood to help Brünnhilde, as Grane, Brünnhilde's steed, falls exhausted. The maidens cry: "Sister, sister, what has happened?" and cluster round Brünnhilde, who now enters helping Sieglinde along, her coming being heralded by suggestions of the motives of the Gods' Distress (24), of Flight (7), and of Death. Brünnhilde cries breathlessly to them to help her, for she announces that she is followed by the War-father, whom they can see now approaching from northward with storm around him. Brünnhilde beseeches the Valkyries to guard her and Sieglinde, and she explains to them how she had protected the Wälsung race from Wotan's changing humour, and had fled to her sisters that they might shield her from the threatening anger of Wotan. The warrior-maidens are aghast at the Valkyrie's deed, and in great consternation pronounce her lost.

Driving the storm hither furiously while his steed neighs wildly, Wotan approaches. Brünnhilde, realising that if the god finds Sieglinde there it will mean the end of the Wälsung race, begs a steed in place of the exhausted Grane, but the Valkyries dare not brave Wotan's wrath in spite of Brünnhilde's importunities.

Sieglinde, who has all this time been silent, bids Brünnhilde not to bring sorrow upon herself.

" Death only can help me." She rejects Brünnhilde's protective embraces : " Who called upon thee, maid, to lead me from the battle ? Perchance there in the turmoil I had fallen by a stroke of the same weapon as laid Siegmund low, and thus been united with him at the end. Now far from Siegmund let Death enshroud me that I may not remember. Lest for having thus fled with me I curse thee, maid, list solemnly to my request. Drive thy sword into my heart."

But Brünnhilde encourages her to live for her lover's sake, and to rescue the pledge that she has received from Siegmund, for she bears a Wälsung in her womb. A sharp rising figure on the strings denotes Sieglinde's ecstasy as the purport of Brünnhilde's speech dawns on her. She cries in sudden resolve :

" Rescue me, bold one. Save my child. Protect me, you maidens, with your mightiest shield."

The theme of the Gods' Distress (24) is repeated as an undertone, and the storm is heard approaching, to the terror of the assembled Valkyries, who demand that the woman be taken hence, since they fear to shelter her from the god. Sieglinde implores Brünnhilde's help. Brünnhilde raises the cowering mother-to-be, and bids her fly swiftly alone, for she, Brünnhilde, will stay and incur Wotan's wrath while the woman escapes his vengeance. And again the Distress-motive (24), this time more distinct, suggests the regret of the maiden at thus contravening the will of her father. But whither is Sieglinde to flee ? Siegrune explains how in a wild forest far eastward Fafner guards the Nibelung hoard, and Schwertleite adds that Alberich's ring is in the

giant's keeping in a cave where he dwells in dragon form, the bass clarinet, horns, and bassoons repeatedly giving out here a theme descriptive of the Dragon (14). This would seem to be no home for a helpless woman, Grimgerde suggests, but Brünnhilde points to its advantage insomuch as Wotan fears and avoids the dragon lair. The Valkyries warn Brünnhilde of the near approach of Wotan, and again the Gods' Distress (24) is sharply signalised. Brünnhilde then gives voice to one of her most dramatic songs, bidding the Wälsung maid fly swiftly eastward, and with high courage bear every ill.

"Hunger, thirst, stone and thorn: laugh on these, though need and pain gnaw thee. For one thing know, and ever regard," she cries, as the time of the orchestra slows down in a prolonged rallentando to announce, as it were, in the most dramatic form, the entry of the triumphant Siegfried-motive (26), upon which Brünnhilde announces: "The world's most glorious hero is sheltered, O woman, in thy protective womb."

This motive first accompanies Brünnhilde's words, is then repeated in a modified form by practically the whole of the wood-wind and horns, and this is immediately followed by the Sword-motive (18) sharply given out on the trumpet as Brünnhilde draws the broken fragments of Siegmund's sword, Nothung, from under her cuirass, and bids Sieglinde cherish them well.

"By good fortune I saved them from the place where his father died. Who brandishes the sword forged anew, let him take his name from me. Let Siegfried delight thee with his victory."

With this last reference to Siegfried is associated a

suggestion of his own motive (26), and the last line of this magnificent lyric introduces a new and poignant theme, that of Redemption by Love (38) (peculiarly allied to Brünnhilde's superb ideology), which reappears only in the last magnificent climax of "The Ring." On this theme Sieglinde replies to the Valkyrie acknowledging the wonder and comfort which the warrior-maiden's words have brought to her, and we have, as it were, a prophetic gleam of the destiny of Brünnhilde as Sieglinde wishes that one day her thanks shall bring the maiden the reward of joy, this being of course the love of the hero Siegfried. She hastens away as the storm roars up, and Wotan's voice is heard ordering Brünnhilde to stay. The terrified Valkyries advise Brünnhilde to hide, and she, fearing that his wrath will crush her, is overwhelmed with dread. To the stormy emphasis of staccato trumpets the god strides in and confronts the group of Valkyries who shield Brünnhilde.

It should be remarked in passing that Brünnhilde's announcement of Siegfried's birth, which is, in fact, the climax of "Die Walküre," resembles very closely the climax of the preceding drama, "Das Rheingold"—that is, the point where, raising aloft the sword, Wotan conceives the idea of creating the Wälsung race whose selfless heroism is to disrupt the tyranny of the gold over the race of man. It may be said, indeed, that the second phase of Wälsung destiny is now begun, and the similarity of the Siegfried-motive to that of the Sword, although much more developed harmonically and melodically, is additional testimony to this second stage in the evolution of the Wälsung mission of world-salvation.

Wotan demands that the Valkyries shall not shield

his rebellious daughter, and the Valkyries ask him the cause of his terrible anger. He orders them to turn from her whom he has eternally cast off, even as she has cast aside her worth, and again the Rage-motive (23) bursts forth inflexibly. The Valkyries explain in persuasive cadences, in which vague reminders of the spring night episode are interwoven, that Brünnhilde had besought their help, and they plead for the god's compassion on their terrified sister.

"Faint-hearted, womanish brood, did you inherit from me such poor spirit?" demands Wotan. "Did I train you to seek combat bravely, and make your hearts hard and fierce, in order that when my anger threatens a faithless one you should wail and weep?"

He tells them how none but Brünnhilde knew the innermost secrets of his heart and the well-spring of his will, and was the creative womb of his wish. Now that she breaks this holy bond, defies his will and mocks his lordly command, against himself she turns the weapon which only his will had bequeathed her.

"Mark me, Brünnhilde, thou to whom I gave birny, helm, spear, joy and grace, name and life, dost hear? Dost hear me clamour, and hidest thou thyself fearful from my complaints in order that thou mayst shrink away from punishment?"

The music changes here, and although the first sharp notes of the Anger-motive (23) persist, the ensuing passage suggests a relenting of the divine wrath, and Wotan's following words seem to alternate this mood of love for the wish-maiden with wrath at her culpability. For as she comes from among the Valkyries and steadfastly asks Wotan to pronounce her doom, Wotan replies:

"I punish thee not. Thou thyself hast shaped thy penalty. Born of my will alone, thou hast yet gainsaid it. At my commands alone, thou didst go forth; yet thou hast countermanded my orders. Thou wert my wish-maid; yet thy wish has been opposed to me. My shield-maid; yet thou hast raised the shield against me. Lot-chooser; thou hast chosen the lot against me. Inflamer of heroes; thou hast inflamed the heroes against me. Wotan hath said what once thou wert; say thyself what now thou art. Valkyrie thou wert; be from now onward what thou art."

These enigmatic words terrify Brünnhilde, and she asks their meaning. Wotan pronounces her sentence to the theme which we formerly found associated with Brünnhilde's announcement of Death to Siegmund, a gentle, pitiful, and noble strain, which in some ways resembles the soon-emergent motive of the humanity to which Brünnhilde is destined and which later is built up into the musical idea of the New Life (28), to which reference will be made later. The god decrees that the Valkyrie shall no more bring heroes to Walhall, nor be to him the faithful daughter that she has been.

"Parted thou art from the godly band, cast out from the race of the eternal. Broken now is our compact (here the Compact-motive (6) is emphatically stated); banned thou art from my sight."

The Valkyries shriek in pitying terror.

Brünnhilde cries: "Dost take from me all thou hast given?"

Wotan replies: "He who wins thee shall take all this from thee. I banish thee to this rock, and will lock thee in defenceless sleep. That man shall claim the maid who shall find her and wake her."

The Valkyries beg Wotan to relent and recall this curse. "Shall the maid pale and wither in a human embrace?" they demand. "Let the cruel one turn aside this terrible disgrace which will attach to us all."

But Wotan is adamant: she shall be banished from the troop of Valkyries, no longer to ride through the air with them. Her maidenly bloom shall wither, a bridegroom shall win her womanly beauty. Henceforth she shall be subject to a lord; a jest and a jape to all mockers, she shall sit by the hearth and spin. A terrible cry bursts from Brünnhilde when her lot is thus cast, and she sinks abashed to the ground. Wotan commands the Valkyries to leave her, threatening wrathfully to make any who help her share her lot.

"Hasten swiftly away or misfortune shall harry you here."

The warrior-maidens, wailing dolefully, rush into the wood, leap on to their horses, and the dying strains of the Ride (22) announce their departure.

The orchestra now develops the Death-melody plaintively on the wood-wind in which the remote and tragic notes of the *cor anglais* prevail, the theme suggesting at once the recent death of Siegmund and the approaching end of Sieglinde. Brünnhilde still lies at her father's feet, and he has turned away his glance from his best-beloved daughter. She pleads with him to know why her offence is deemed so shameful that this dire punishment must follow it, a variation of the Rage-motive (23) introduced on the horns and oboes with a softened effect indicating her desire to mollify his wrath.

"Look in my eyes, silence thy wrath, soften thy rage, and show to me clearly the dark guilt which compels thee in cruel despite to cast forth thy most trusty child."

Wotan gloomily bids her ask her misdeed of her deed, and we hear a broken suggestion of the Ride-motive (22) as Brünnhilde assures him that she only fought at his command.

The Fate-motive (25) interposes as the god asks: "Did I order thee to fight on the Wälsung's behalf?"

She replies that as lord of fate he did indeed so decree. But Wotan points out that he had withdrawn this first command.

Brünnhilde is, of course, the antithesis of Fricka in relation to the divine will, for while the goddess is a restraining and law-abiding influence, Brünnhilde is the stirrer of heroes and the creative aspect of Wotan's mentality. This is clearly stressed in the ensuing passages, in which the Rage-motive (23) is largely used throughout as a suggestion of Wotan's anger with Fricka because his wife has compelled him to concur with her wishes in the destruction of Siegmund. The idea of Brünnhilde's reaction against Fricka finds expression in the Valkyrie's next words:

"As Fricka made thy own desires stranger to thee, when thou didst join thy will to hers, thou didst become thine own enemy."

Wotan bitterly explains that he thought Brünnhilde at least understood him, and therefore punished her witting obstinacy, but it appears that she thought him faint-hearted and foolish, so then it was not treachery that he had to revenge, since she was all too mean for his anger. The motive of the New Life (28) is heard as Brünnhilde renews her pleading.

This motive is indicated by some editors as actually the motive of Brünnhilde's pleading, but insomuch as it is used later to suggest the change in her estate, and

as this idea is at this moment operating in Brünnhilde's thoughts, the other title is here retained. For her pleadings are aimed at a mitigation of the sentence already passed.

" No wisdom have I, yet I know this one thing, that thou lovest the Wälsung. I knew the discord which constrained thee to forget this one thing. Thou couldst only see the other, which to see tore thy heart—that thou must renounce thy protection of Siegmund."

" And knowing that," cries Wotan, " thou yet didst protect him," and a variant of the Rage-motive (23) suggests a change in the divine mood. For Brünnhilde explains to the god that she had kept the one thought clear before her, while his thought was divided and the Wälsung left unprotected.

" I who protect Wotan's back in battle saw only that which thou sawest not," and slowly the Death-motive usurps the orchestra with gradually increasing force, as she tells how she saw Siegmund in the battle, brought him the news of his doom, and knew his great love, sorrow, and tragic courage. The Compassion-motive, which we formerly found associated with Sieglinde's first discovery of the wearied Siegmund in Hunding's house, and which again points to the similarity of mission of the two women, now emerges as Brünnhilde tells how she determined to save Siegmund or share in his overthrow.

" That seemed the only lot which I could choose, and deeply true to him who breathed this love into my heart, whose will had set his Wälsung son beside me, I defied thy word."

Wotan acknowledges that Brünnhilde has indeed been true to his other self, but a twofold need enthralled

him, and this dual bondage afflicts his thought as he compares his own case with that of the Valkyrie.

"Didst thou so lightly deem the winning of heart's deepest rapture while burning woe burst forth in my heart, when terrible need made anguish for me, because I must stem the well-spring of love for the world in my tortured heart?" And he tells her how, when, overcome because of Fricka's constraint, he had to rebut his own will, the dreadful thought occurred to him to end his eternal distress in the ruins of his world. The Gods' Distress (24) and Compassion themes occur here, and the Curse of the Ring (15) on the trombones suggests the cause of this divine tragedy.

"All the while," he continues, "blessed delight was thy portion, and laughing thou drankest the draught of love, while for me was mixed the bitter gall of godly distress."

The accompaniment here hints at the Renunciation of Love (11b), the price of the ring, which Wotan has now to pay for his denial of the ring to the Rhine-daughters, and the dolour of the Distress-motive (24) yields to the tender theme of the New Life (28) as he bids:

"Let thy light heart lead thee then from now on: thou hast ordained thyself free of me. I must part from thee, and nevermore dare I whisper counsels with thee. We must meet no more."

But Brünnhilde had had only one clear thought—to love all that Wotan had loved. Must she then leave him, she asks, and their close bond be broken? Will he hold far from him the very heart of him which once was so completely his?

"Forget not that," she warns. "Do not dishonour

thy eternal part, nor call down disgrace that will shame thee too. If thou makest me a butt of scorn, thou, too, wilt suffer disgrace."

But Wotan replies determinedly : " Gladly didst thou follow the might of love ; follow now him who can compel thy love."

If that is to be her lot, she begs that he will let no boastful coward claim her—" Let him not be worthless who wins me "—and her ultimate fate is suggested by the appearance of the Siegfried-melody (26).

" Thou hast turned from the War-father," says Wotan ; " he may not choose for thee." But the note of Wälsung Heroism (21), with its powerful surge of sound, enters here as Brünnhilde cries :

" Thou hast created a noble race which never can bring forth a craven. Well I know the most peerless hero shall blossom from the Wälsung stem." And again the Siegfried-motive is heard joyously.

But Wotan commands her not to name the Wälsung race to him—when he cast her off he cast them off too. Envy shall consume them. But " she who cut herself off from thee will save them," Brünnhilde assures him, and to the triumphant notes of the Siegfried-motive (26) tells him that Sieglinde in such pangs as woman has never suffered shall bring forth what now she hides in fear. Wotan commands the Valkyrie never to seek shelter for Sieglinde nor for her child with him. Wotan's command here has a double meaning, for it must be remembered that the Wälsungs can only prevail so long as they do their work without the god's direct assistance, so that we see that the disobedience for which Brünnhilde must pay serves actually for the completion of Wotan's will in which he must have no

directive part. The Sword-motive (18) appears emphatically as Brünnhilde informs her father that Sieglinde possesses Nothung, but Wotan exclaims incredulously:

"The sword that I struck in pieces!"

The Fate-motive looms darkly, as the War-father advises the Valkyrie:

"Strive not, O maid, to disturb my spirit. Await thy fate as it comes to thee. I cannot choose it for thee." Again the Fate-motive (25) intrudes on the Eternal Sleep-motive (27), which is the basis of the accompaniment to this passage. "I turned from thee who turned from me. I must not know even what thou wishest thyself; only must I see the punishment concluded."

In response to Brünnhilde's enquiry as to the nature of that punishment, to the long-drawn strains of the Sleep-motive (27), the god tells her that she shall be locked in a fast sleep until some man shall awaken her. Falling to her knees, Brünnhilde implores him to surround her with terrifying horrors so that only a fearless and most free-spirited hero shall first come upon her on the rock. At this point again the Siegfried-motive foretells a tragic but glorious lot. But Wotan tells her the boon she asks is too great. If this may not be, then she begs him to crush her who clasps his knees.

"Tread down the dear one, destroy the maid, let thy spear banish all trace of thy love," and the Compact-motive (6), sharply interposing, reminds us of the runes of Wotan's bargains carved in his spear's shaft. "But, wrathful one, bestow not this terrible shame on me."

The Ride-theme (22) given out on the trumpet suggests a return of her warrior-spirit as she begs wildly of the god to let a fire (indicated by the Magic Fire-

motive (10) ) burn up on the rock and surround it with a flaming girdle to protect her from any fearful man who shall draw near the dread fell. The Ride-motive (22) slowly and majestically given out is replaced by the theme of Brünnhilde's Sleep (29), as Wotan begins the first of his two songs of farewell to the Valkyrie, songs which assuredly stand foremost in their nobility and power among the creations of the world's musicians. He bids a long adieu to the glorious maid as he raises her and gazes with emotion into her eyes.

" Must I part from thee and never welcome thee lovingly again ? Never mayest thou ride nor feast with me ? Must I abandon thee whom I love, the laughing joy of my eyes ? "

The Loge-motive (9) advises that he has agreed to her prayer.

" Such a bridal fire," he says, " shall now burn for thee as never burned for a bride," and the Magic Fire (10) leaps out in the orchestra as he promises that the flaming glow shall flare round the rock to terrify with its searing horror the base one. Cowards shall fly Brünnhilde's fell, and the Siegfried-motive (26) announces the god's recognition of her lot as he says with envious yearning :

" For one alone shall win the bride, one freer than I, god though I be."

The New Life melody (28) is taken up by the orchestra and developed into a glorious hymn pulsating with the ecstasy which the godly pair feel as Brünnhilde sinks enraptured on her father's breast and he holds her in a long embrace. The motive of Brünnhilde's Sleep (29) leads up to Wotan's final adieu, and in the main accompanies it. The mournful and tragic beauty of this peer-

less song is considered by many the master-stroke of this, the greatest opera of "The Ring" cycle. The superb beauty of the actual words seems to suggest that Wagner had predestined it to make the magnificent *finale* to this great episode, and the effectiveness of the *Stabreim* unfortunately defies adequate literary translation which can at the same time capture the necessary musical stresses.

"Thy laughing eyes, which often I kissed smiling when thy valour in the field deserved my kiss, when from thy lovely lips in childish prattle flowed the praise of heroes—those radiant eyes which, when hope's yearning ate my heart, and when my will wandered to the bliss of the world, shone out to me often in the storm, for the last time now lure me to the last kiss of farewell. On happier mortal these stars shall gleam; upon me, luckless immortal, must they close, departed for aye." The tragic theme of the Renunciation of Love (11b) is followed immediately by the pathetic and similar strain of Love Regret (11a), as Wotan adds:

"Thus, then, the god leaves thee; thus by a kiss he takes from thee thy godhead."

A softened suggestion of the Fate theme (25) melts into that of Eternal Sleep (27), which in turn gives place to the Sleep of Brünnhilde (29), as Wotan kisses her on her closed eyes. She sinks unconscious into his arms, and he bears her to a bank, on which he lays her gently. With one last gaze at her features, he closes her helmet, places her shield over her, then strides across, signalling with his spear as he calls upon Loge. The Fate-motive (25) and that of the Compact (6) are heard as Wotan cries:

"As once I found thee a fiery glow, as once thou

didst vanish in a wandering fire, as once I bound thee, I conjure thee now! Hither, weaving fire, wind thyself flaming round this fell! Loge, hither!"

He strikes three times with his spear-point on the rock, and the Loge (9) and Fire (10) motives, which have been heard during his incantation, seem to leap into life as the fire spurts out in a stream which grows into a sea of flame that spills itself, as Wotan directs, round the rock. The Siegfried-motive (26) is given out triumphantly on the brass, accompanied by the theme of Brünnhilde's deepening Sleep (29) and the leaping flames. We hear as an undertone the reminder of the melody of Wotan's adieu and the Fate-motive (25) as these flames seem to glitter and glow overwhelmingly in the massive *finale* as the scene closes.

# CHAPTER VII

## "SIEGFRIED"

### ACT I

THE third drama of "The Ring" tetralogy, the Second Evening, as Wagner designated it, traces the history of the hero who gives his name to the title, from his leaving the cave in which, after Sieglinde's death, he had been brought up by the Nibelung smith, Mime, to his winning the Valkyrie maiden as his bride.

The slow-moving overture begins with a doleful strain descriptive in a measure of Mime's gloomy mentality, and the simple rising theme associated with the Nibelung hoard soon emerges on the bassoons, to be followed by the Anvil-motive (12) associated with the Nibelung toil, and the gloomy Servitude-motive (2). This gives place in turn to repeated musical reference to the Ring (4). At the climax of the development of the Ring-theme, the Sword-motive (18) is given out softly on the bass trumpet; then again the Anvil-motive, combined with the Servitude, heralds the rising of the curtain on a cave interior with two openings on to a forest.

At one side, in the background, is a smith's forge, formed naturally by the rock, and above it is a chimney, again a natural formation; beside the forge the great bellows. The equipment of a smithy and a very large

anvil are also seen, and at this anvil the dwarf Mime is working anxiously upon a sword, the Anvil-motive's (12) repetitive clamour depicting his toil as he laments the endless task that he has to make a sword which, though strong enough for a giant's fist, the insolent youth smashes as though it were a toy. The Sword-motive is faintly suggested as Mime tells of one weapon, Nothung, which, could he but forge it, the boy would not break. If only he could forge it, he would win the reward of his shame. The Dragon-motive (14) is heard on the tubas as Mime tells of Fafner, who in dragon form hides in the deep wood, guarding with his terrific bulk the hoard. Siegfried's youthful power could lay Fafner low and get the Nibelung ring for Mime; only the sword is needed for this deed, for Nothung alone will serve the dwarf's purpose, in Siegfried's hands, and Mime cannot forge Nothung. Again he begins to hammer, repeating his complaint:

"Work as I will, he strikes and breaks my work."

The joyous motive of Siegfried's Horn-call (30) is heard as the youth, with his yellow hair streaming and clad in a simple raiment of skins, enters leading a bear which he has tied with a rope, and which he now drives towards Mime. Mime drops the sword and hides behind the forge as the youth brings the bear closer.

"Hoi-ho! At him! Seize him! Seize the tinker!" cries Siegfried, laughing joyously.

Mime's terror is comic. "Take him away!" he cries; "bring no bears here."

"We come in couples, the better to catch thee," says Siegfried. "Now, Bruin, demand the sword."

Mime points to the weapon which he has just finished. Siegfried gaily releases the bear and, giving

him a friendly tap on the back, bids him be off, since he needs him no more; and the bear ambles out into the wood. Tremblingly Mime upbraids Siegfried:

"I gave thee leave to kill bears, but why dost bring them alive home with thee?"

Siegfried explains that he sought better companions than the one who awaits him at home. When he was winding his horn in the forest to see if a friend would answer, a bear came from the bushes and pleased him well as a companion, though a better he will find, so he bridled the bear with a rope and brought him to demand the sword. He now takes the sword.

"What boots its sharp edge if the steel is not well tempered? What silly toy is this?" he cries. "Callest this poor pin a sword?" And therewith he strikes it on the anvil and it flies in pieces. (Here we meet for the first time a new theme extensively used throughout this act, suggesting the youthful enthusiasm of the young hero.) "There thou hast the pieces, shameful dolt. Would I had broken it across thy pate! Shall I longer bear thy boasts?" and he mocks the stories that Mime has told him of the giants for whose slaying Mime makes him weapons which break in his hand.

If Mime were not too petty an opponent, he would throw the ugly dwarf into his own forge and thus make an end of his loathing. Mime complains of his ingratitude, assuring him that all he does is for the youth's good:

"Wilt thou, then, never remember what I taught thee concerning thanks? Thou shouldst always gladly obey him who has ever shown himself well-disposed to thee."

As Siegfried turns his back on him he begs him to

taste some of the dishes which he has prepared for him. These, however, Siegfried scornfully refuses, and Mime, to bring home the lesson of ingratitude, tells how he brought the boy up from a tiny child, waited on him, forged toys and a horn for him, instructed him, all for the sake of a hasty boy who now only hates him. The narration is sung to a simple melody suggestive of a nursery rhyme, but its childish cadences do not touch Siegfried. Much as the dwarf has taught him, he has not schooled him to tolerate the sight of the dwarf, whose every deed he loathes.

"I see thee stand, shamble, and walk, nodding and crawling with blinking eyes, and long to crush out thy life."

But why, he wonders, does he return always to the cave when the beasts, birds, and fishes are dearer to him than the dwarf. Here we meet a beautiful motive of Love-longing (31), strangely associated with Mime, yet perhaps not so strangely when we recall that Mime had tended Sieglinde in her tragic hour. The motive well expresses Siegfried's yearning for human companionship, moreover, and accompanies his enquiries as to his own youth.

"The young ones ever long for their parents' nest," Mime explains, "and so thou yearnest towards me"; and he goes on to tell how he is to the young hero all that mother-bird is to the fledgling while it is still too feeble to fly. Then, in one of the lovely passages so full of the spirit of the open woods which have been his playground, Siegfried describes how he saw two birds mating in the woods, building their nest, and that Mime had explained to him that they were like man and wife. They tended their fledglings, and both dutifully

guarded their brood. And, again, he had marked the paired deer, foxes, and wolves, and how the male brought food while the mother suckled the young. Thus had he learned what love was, and now he asks :

" Where, then, Mime, is thy loving wife, that I may call her Mother ? "

Mime exclaims on Siegfried's stupidity, asking him : " Art thou bird or fox ? "

The simple nursery rhyme reappears, this time with Siegfried's voice, as he asks whence came the tiny mite. " Didst thou, then, make me without a mother ? "

But when Mime explains that he is father and mother in one, Siegfried's anger bursts out, and he accuses the dwarf of lying. He has seen how the young resemble their parents. Looking in a stream, he observed animals and trees, sun and clouds, in reflected images, and the Siegfried (26) and Wälsung motives (19) appear as he explains that he there saw his own picture, so different in appearance from the dwarf's. " A glistening fish were as like a toad, yet no toad bore ever a fish." And, again, to the strains of Love-longing (31), he tells that he realises why he always returns : it is that he may learn only from Mime who were his father and mother. When Mime refuses information, Siegfried seizes him violently and demands forcefully to know about his parents, and the half-stifled Mime confesses that he is neither father nor kin to the youth.

" A stranger thou art to me, thy only friend. I hid thee here only for pity's sake, and now I have a loving reward, fool that I was to expect thanks."

And the Wälsung and Compassion themes give place to the Love-motive (20) as Mime explains how he found Sieglinde and succoured her, and when she died,

but Siegfried lived, it was Mime who undertook the protection of the child. He begins again to relate how he brought the child up (the nursery rhyme theme descriptive of Mime's foster-fatherhood alternating throughout the ensuing passages with the Wälsung (19) and Siegfried (26) motives). Siegfried asks why he was called Siegfried, and interrupts the dwarf every time he would get back into his narration of his own care of the babe with insistent questionings, eventually learning his mother's name.

"If I must believe your news, give me a sign," Siegfried demands, and the Sword-motive (18) is heard as Mime shows him the broken pieces of Nothung. Siegfried demands: "For me shalt thou forge these pieces; then will I swing my own true sword," and the theme of his youthful enthusiasm, joined later with the Sword-motive (18), accompanies his cry: "Up, Mime, hasten! Quickly, now! If a good workman thou art, now prove thy craft. Deceive me no more with wretched toys; now will I trust alone in these pieces. If thou dost deceive me, thou shalt rue it, or if there is a flaw in the steel, thy back shall pay for it. For I swear to-day the sword shall be mine"; and to the impetuous strains of his Wander-song Siegfried tells how he will journey forth never to return, and expresses his delight that he is free of all bondage and constraint. "Thou art no father of mine, and my home is afar. Thy hearth is not my home nor thy roof my abode. Glad as the fish swimming in the stream, free as the finch, I fly from here, and float out like a wind wafted o'er the woods, never to see thee again."

Despite Mime's terrified protestations and recalls, he goes off into the wood. Mime is horrified at his depar-

ture, for he sees an end of all his plans to lead Siegfried to Fafner's lair in order to obtain the Nibelung hoard. His anguish is expressed by the motives of the Anvil (12) and Servitude (2), and he bewails his inability to forge the sword, whose hardness no hammer can conquer:

"The envy, zeal, and need of the Nibelung fail to make Nothung whole."

A new motive here intrudes to signify the wandering Wotan. Restless and unable to remain in his splendid fastness, the chief of the gods must needs journey about the earth to learn what is to be the outcome of his bargain-hemmed Wälsung creation. And as he once came to Sieglinde wrapped in his blue mantle, the broad-brimmed hat shielding his visage, so he now comes to Mime's cave, his presence announced by the melancholy Wanderer-motive. He greets the smith, who cringingly asks him who he is who pursues him in the forest's depths.

"Wanderer am I called," says Wotan.

"Away, then, and stay not here, if the world calls you Wanderer," answers Mime.

Wotan urges that he has learned much wisdom in his wanderings, but Mime has wisdom enough; therefore he bids the Wanderer begone. The Compact-motive (6) introduces a wager which Wotan offers, and he stakes his head as the gage if he cannot tell Mime anything which he desires to know. He will answer three questions. Mime asks him, first, the name of the race dwelling in the depths of the earth.

"There," says the Wanderer, "dwell the Nibelungs, black-elves once, ruled over by Black-Alberich by virtue of a ring. The diligent race heaped a shimmering

hoard of rich treasure for him who thought to rule the world," the Walhall-motive (5) suggesting the height of Alberich's ambition.

"What race abides on the earth's surface?" is Mime's second question, and the Wanderer explains to the accompaniment of the Giant-motive (8), that there abide the race of Giants, their land being called Riesenheim. He tells the story of the giants' quarrel, and demands to know the third question.

"Who dwell in high heaven?" asks the Nibelung, and to the stately strains of the Walhall theme (5) Wotan tells of the light-elves and Light-Alberich, Wotan, their lord, and of their share in the tragic happenings of the ring.

Now that he has ransomed his head, he has something in turn to ask, and the dwarf must in turn pledge his head. Mime explains that Wotan's glance bewilders his mother-wit, but he will, nevertheless, make trial. The Wanderer asks him the name of the race which Wotan treats so harshly and yet loves so well, the Wälsung-motive (19) clearly indicating the race in question, both in the query and the reply, in which Mime tells of the Wälsungs' lot. The Wanderer's second question is: "What sword must Siegfried wield for Fafner's undoing?" and the smith relates the story of Nothung. The Wanderer laughs at this reply, and demands to know whose hand shall reforge the mighty splinters. Mime is unable to give the answer, for he has himself failed to forge the sword, and the Sword-motive (18) recurs together with the Compact-motive (6)—reminding Mime of his wager—as Wotan claims to have won the dwarf's clever head.

"Only he who never felt fear shall succeed in smith-

ing the sword Nothung," and the Sword-motive is heard again, as is Loge's theme (9), when Wotan prepares to go. " Guard thy cunning head from this time on. I leave it a forfeit to him who never learnt the meaning of fear."

The Siegfried-motive (26) is heard here in conjunction with the continuing Loge-motive as Wotan departs, the brilliant music descriptive of the fire-god being combined with the Dragon-motive (14) as Mime, after a long silence, during which he has glared at the brightly sunlit wood, bursts out angrily :

" Accursed light, why does the air flame ? What is it that flames and flickers, flutters and whirs, sweeps and floats and blazes all round ? " And vividly he describes his terror of the light : " Terrible jaws reach out for me. The dragon will seize me. Fafner, Fafner ! " and with a terrified shriek he cowers behind the anvil.

Siegfried dashes in, lustily demanding how it goes with the sword, and as he cannot see Mime, he calls out for him. The dwarf tells him of the Wanderer's words, and explains that he is too wise never to have felt fear, and that his head is forfeit to the man who is fearless, and he has not taught fear to Siegfried. Siegfried upbraids him for not having worked that day upon the sword, but Mime tells him that he has been pondering for Siegfried's good and had learned fear for him. For what use were the mightiest sword to him who knows not fear ? And, to an accompaniment of the interwoven Mime and Wälsung (19) motives, Mime tells him that his mother gave him instructions that Siegfried was not to be allowed to go out into the world until he had learned what fear was.

" If 'tis an art, why have I not learned it ? Out with

it! What is this fear?" and the Loge-motive (9) again enters, and is later replaced by the motive of the Magic Fire (10), as Mime strives to raise fear in Siegfried's heart by describing the terror of fire.

But Siegfried explains how this excites and delights him. Mime promises to lead him to the terrifying flames, and then the Dragon-motive (14) interposes as the dwarf tells of Fafner, who shall assuredly teach the youth fear. Siegfried curiously inquires where Fafner's cave lies, and, learning that it is near the edge of the world, expresses his intention of going there to learn fear and then out into the world.

"Quickly, then! Make the sword that I may wield it throughout the world." Siegfried perceives that the dwarf is really trying to trick him, for Mime has let slip the fact that the fearless one might reforge it. "My father's steel will yield to my skill. I alone may forge the sword!" cries Siegfried, and there are suggestions of the Anvil-motive (12) combined with Servitude (2) as Siegfried quickly begins his task of forging, although Mime endeavours to dissuade him by assuring him of his inability. The youngster heaps up the charcoal on the hearth to the joyous Horn-call (30), combined with a theme for the strings suggestive of toil, thrusts the sword into the vice, and files it in pieces. The dwarf meanwhile advises him to solder the broken fragments, but Siegfried will not weld a sword with such pap, for the sword must be ground into pieces in order that it may be mended.

"Folly alone helps the fool," says Mime, as he marvels at Siegfried's tremendous activity.

Loge, the fire-god, is again signalised as Siegfried blows the fire up to glow brightly, and the dwarf per-

ceives that the lad will succeed, and terror for his own safety grows, for he sees an end of all his plans, since, if the boy does not learn fear, he, Mime, will suffer, and if Siegfried fears the dragon, the dragon's spoils will not fall to the dwarf. The Ring-motive (4) is heard several times as Mime bewails the loss which he foresees. Siegfried asks him the name of the sword, and the dwarf tells him it is called " Nothung," and a motive built up of the octave interval already familiar in the Sword-motive, and descriptive of the noble weapon of the Wälsungs, is heard in combination with the smelting-theme as Siegfried lustily plies the bellows and begins what is quite justly one of the most famous songs of this drama, the celebrated Sword-song (Schwert-lied). As Siegfried shouts lustily with boyish delight, hauling on the bellows, the orchestra most realistically describes his occupation, for the sweep of wind on the 'cellos' deeper notes is answered by the leap of flames from the forge, indicated by shimmering tremolo notes on the clarinets and oboes, and this lusty song is dominated throughout by the octave theme of Nothung. It is indeed a triumph of realistic-imaginative orchestration, and admirably sets forth the boyish delight of the hero in the work of his hands. Mime sees that the boy will win the prize unless the Nibelung craft and guile can prevent him. He decides to let Siegfried slay the dragon, and a potion which Mime will prepare shall then be given to him, and as he lies unconscious from its effects Mime will kill him with the sword, and gain the ring and treasure. Meanwhile Siegfried is working with volcanic energy ; he pours the melted steel into a mould and thrusts this into the water, his song vividly describing the effect of the cooling water on the harden-

ing steel, and the Sword-motive (18) reappears as he prophesies that hot blood shall soon flow from the cooling blade.

"Now sweat once again, O Nothung, jealous sword, that I may weld thee"; and thrusting the sword into the charcoal once more, he turns to Mime, who has put a pot at the edge of the fire.

Siegfried asks him what mess he brews while he melts the steel. Since the smith is put to shame by the craft of a child, he shall become a cook, and Siegfried mocks the dwarf, whose craft has deserted him and who now learns cooking. But as all the swords which the smith made were broken by Siegfried, the youth will not touch the food that he prepares, and he thinks that the dwarf will even fail to teach him fear. Having drawn the glowing steel from the embers, he beats it with a great smith's sledge-hammer as he sings the well-known Smithy-song (Schmiedelied) to the accompaniment of sharp hammer blows.

"Forge me, my hammer, a well-tempered sword. Ho ho! Hahei! Once deep-hued blood dyed thy steely blue, its red smears encarmined thee, and coldly thou didst laugh as thou didst lick the warm blood cool. Now the flame has made thee blush red, thy softened steel yields to the hammer, and thou showerest sparks angrily over me who tamed thy pride. How those sparks delight me! Anger well adorns the bold. Thou laughest joyously to me, yet well mayst thou look grave and terrible. I have done well with hammer and fire, with sturdy strokes I have beaten thee out. Now let thy rosy shame vanish. Be cold and hard as ever thou mayst. Heia-ho!"

His laugh joyously responds to the hiss of the steel as

he thrusts it once more into the cooling water. Mime in the interim has poured his poisonous decoction into a phial, and a new motive descriptive of his cringing is heard as he brags how he will win the power of the ring which his brother Alberich once held, and he promises himself that he will in turn exercise his power over the Nibelung horde. The Anvil-motive (12) descriptive of the Nibelungs recurs as he boasts how the whole world shall be tributary to his power. The scene draws to its conclusion with a most dramatic concurrence of the Nibelung crafty hatred and greed and the heroic delight of Siegfried in his new-made weapon. " Thus," cries the hero, " Siegfried's sword cuts," as, to the accompaniment of the joyous Horn-call (30) and the Sword-theme (18), in which is blended the theme of Siegfried's toil, the youth smites the anvil with a mighty blow, splitting it sheer into two pieces. Mime, terrified, falls ludicrously to the ground as Siegfried waves his sword triumphantly above his head, and the curtain falls.

## Act II

The prelude to the second act introduces us with dark menace to the giant Fafner, whose ungainly and raucous motive, very similar to that of the Giants (8), is given out together with that of the Dragon (14). Soon the Ring-motive (4) appears, together with the Curse of the Ring (15) and the theme of the Nibelung-hatred.

The curtain rises on a thick forest, in the depths of which is seen the mouth of a cave, the rocky abode of the transformed giant, down to which the scene slopes, only the upper part of the opening being visible. There is a rocky precipice, half hidden by the trees, to one

side, and the darkness makes it very difficult to see the scene, however. But Alberich, who haunts the spot where the treasure wrested from him is now guarded by the monster, can be discerned in the shadows near by this rock. The music ominously interprets the Nibelung-hate as Alberich tells of his vigil. A storm wind rises and a blue glow lightens the woods as the motive of Gods' Distress (24) is heard together with the Ride-motive (22). Alberich intuitively guesses that the dragon-slayer approaches, but the storm wind passes and the light disappears to the dread theme of the Curse (15), given out slowly on the trombones, to be heard again followed by the theme of Nibelung-hate.

The Wanderer strides out of the wood. At first Alberich is terrified, but almost immediately breaks into horrible rage against his enemy, who now stands illuminated by the moonlight, as the Walhall strains (5) illustrate more eloquently than any words the antithesis of the nature of Light- and Dark-Alberich. The black-elf conjures Wotan to go onward, saying that he has done enough wrong already. Wotan replies that he has come to see, not to do; but the dwarf tells that he now knows all that is in Wotan's mind, and he knows that it was the ring stolen from him that paid the price of Walhall, and that Wotan dares not take back by force the wage that he has paid; otherwise the spear, the symbol of his power, would be broken. The Compact-motive (6) reminds us of the rune-carved spear, and the Loge-motive (9) at the end of Alberich's taunt recalls both the assistance of the fire-god in the past and his ultimate triumph. Alberich glories in the fact that his curse will soon bring down the lord of the ring, and he wonders who shall inherit the treasure. If it falls to him,

he will use its power to the full to vanquish Walhall and make the world his. Wotan tells him that the ring will be his who wins it, and the Sword-motive (18) is heard as Alberich explains that he knows this and that the Wälsungs born to Wotan make the god bold. Wotan warns the elf of Siegfried's approach, and says, moreover, that the boy knows nothing of the might of the ring until Mime tells him. Wotan explains also :

" Whom I love I leave to shift for himself. Let him stand or fall by his own mastery. Only from heroes comes help to me."

" Have I, then, to contend with Mime only for the ring ? " asks the dwarf.

" He alone covets it except for thyself."

The Dragon (14) and the Fafner (8) motives accompany the Wanderer's advice to the dwarf to ask what he wishes to know of Fafner, who might give the ring in exchange for a warning, and he calls on Fafner to awake. The dragon inquires who wakes him, and Wotan tells him of the bargain he has just suggested. Alberich tells of the hero who approaches, and Fafner's voice replies :

" I am hungry for him."

He proposes that Fafner yield to him the ring, but the dragon-giant replies :

" I lie here in possession ; let me sleep on."

Wotan laughs at the failure of this stratagem, and advises the dwarf to try his skill with his brother Mime, whom, doubtless, he understands better ; and the Sword-motive (18), associated with the theme of Siegfried's freedom, is heard as he says :

" Now shalt thou learn strange things."

The storm-wind arises again as the Wanderer disap-

pears into the forest, and the Ride-motive (22) again reappears in association with other musical themes connected with Wotan as the dwarf watches him ride away, to be replaced by the Curse (15) as the elf prophesies the downfall of the eternals and hides himself to the grim repetitive phrase of Nibelung-hate as day dawns over the forest.

A passage of great orchestral beauty and resource precedes the appearance of Siegfried and Mime, and reminds us vividly with its use of the musical material associated with the melting of the sword, the joyous theme of youthful enthusiasm, the flames, and the Nibelung toil, of the exploit which led up to the adventure upon which the young hero has now embarked. Siegfried is eager to learn this fear of which the dwarf has told him. Mime tries to inspire the youth with terror by describing Fafner's might and horror, but the boy gaily replies that he will thrust Nothung into the proud one's heart.

"Perhaps that is what thou callest fear?" he queries, and he orders the hated dwarf to leave him.

Mime bids him lie in wait for the dragon, who will come down to the spring to drink. Siegfried laughs and advises the dwarf to wait at the spring so that, when the dragon arrives there to drink with Nothung in his heart, he shall swallow the dwarf with the draught. Mime, thinking of the poison which he carries, reminds Siegfried that after the fight he will feel thirsty, and bids Siegfried call upon him if he needs advice or feels fear. Siegfried angrily drives him away. Mime goes into the wood saying:

"Fafner and Siegfried, would each might lay the other low."

Siegfried stretches himself under a great lime-tree, and there begins another of those superb lyric interludes with which Wagner knew so well how to vary the mood of his dramatic compositions. Like the passage in " Die Walküre " which precedes the death of Siegfried, so this passage brings in new dramatic material descriptive not of the softening influences of womanhood on the hero, but of the deeply reflective and expansive emotions induced by the soft murmurs of the sunlit woodland.

To the caressing pulsation of the *Waldweben* (literally " Forest-weaving," though better known to concert-goers as " Forest Murmurs "), Siegfried rejoices to know that he is no son of Mime, which knowledge for the first time makes all beautiful to him, and he wonders what his father was like. The Nibelung-motive (12) introduces a dramatic passage as he assures himself that if Mime had had a son, he would have looked even as gruesome, grizzled and grey as the hateful elf himself. Then the *Waldweben* returns, and a wonderfully pathetic rendering of the Wälsung-motive accompanies it as he reflects on how he desires to know of his mother.

" Surely her soft shining eyes were like those of the roe-deer, but much lovelier." He recalls her death at his birth, and innocently asks : " Do all the mothers of mankind die for their sons ? If so, it is piteous " ; and the theme of Love-longing (31) surges with irresistible sweetness through the orchestra as he tells his yearning to see his mother, a mortal woman.

We hear the Freia-motive, expressive of the beauty of womankind, then the Forest-murmur resumes its sway, and out of it creeps gently, with growing insistence, the song of a Forest Bird (32). Siegfried looks up at the

*SIEGFRIED. Act 2. A Deep Forest. Night.*

*In the background the entrance to a cave. Towards the middle of the stage the ground rises to a flattened knoll. To the left a fissured cliff. The forms of the trees are conveyed by a series of facets, the planes being partly actual, partly suggested by a painted surface.*

little songster, which he has never before heard, and wishes he could understand its sweet singing, which, he thinks, might tell him something of his mother. The dwarf had once told him that men might learn the language of the birds, and he will try this. He goes to the stream and cuts a reed, of which he makes a pipe, and when the bird stops he tries to imitate the bird's song upon his reed. Two or three times he alters his primitive whistle, but eventually, finding that he cannot answer the bird effectively, he sits down and listens. The delicious *naïveté* of this scene is handled with consummate orchestral skill, the bird seeming to mock the young hero's imitative efforts. Rather than be shamed by the bird, Siegfried throws away the reed and bids the bird listen to the glad woodland song which he will blow on his horn.

" Once only wolf and bear came at my call ; perhaps now some dear companion will come " ; and he makes the forest ring with the joyous fanfare of his Horn-call (30).

The companion that Siegfried has called forth is an unexpected one, for Fafner rears his long lizard-like body out of his lair and breaks through the bushes as he bellows loudly, the ungainly raucous notes of the bass tubas and the contrabass tuba giving out the Dragon-motive (14). Siegfried turns towards the monster, looks wonderingly at it—and laughs.

" My song has called forth a cheerful wight. Thou wouldst make a pretty companion ! "

He asks whether the dragon will teach him fear, for if he cannot, he will attack him ; and as the dragon opens his terrifying jaws in anticipation of his meal, Siegfried comments on the teeth which he sees laughing

to him. Fafner threatens the youth, but Siegfried remains undaunted and, drawing his sword, challenges the monster, who seeks to smite him with his tail. The various motives of the Sword (18), the Horn-call (30), the Dragon (14), and Fafner occur in the orchestral accompaniment of the battle which follows. Siegfried leaps behind the dragon and wounds him in the tail. Fafner howls and seeks to hurl himself on the intrepid lad, but in rearing himself up Fafner exposes his breast to Siegfried, who thrusts Nothung home to the hilt. He rears again and falls as Siegfried releases his sword and leaps to one side. The theme of Nibelung-hatred is combined with the Fafner-motive, and later the Curse-motive (15) is heard as the dying monster asks who is his fatal adversary and who has encouraged him to this deed. Siegfried tells him that he knows not who he is, the Siegfried-motive (26) accompanying his words, but Fafner himself had stirred him to the deed. Fafner tells him of the giants' lot, and warns Siegfried against Mime. Siegfried asks the dying monster of his father, and tells him that his own name is Siegfried. But with that name in his mouth the monster expires.

"The dead give no tidings," says Siegfried; "let, then, my living sword be my guide"; and he wrenches the sword from the breast of the dragon.

In doing so his hand is splashed with the blood, which burns him. He raises his hand to his mouth to suck away the blood. As he does so, the Bird-song (32), mingled with the soft murmurs of the forest, breaks forth again. And now Siegfried recognises the meaning of the forest-bird's call as it sings:

"Hei, Siegfried now owns the Nibelung hoard. O, now let him find the hoard in the cave. If he but wins

the Tarnhelm, 'twill serve him for wonderful deeds, but if he will make the ring his own, it will make him the world's master."

Siegfried acknowledges the bird's counsel, climbs down into the cavern, and is lost to sight. Mime creeps back and Alberich comes out of the cleft in which he has been hiding and carefully observes his brother, whom he challenges concerning his intention. The hideous pair quarrel over the possession of the ring. Mime suggests that they divide the spoil, and he will take Tarnhelm, but Alberich will not hear of giving up the wishing-cap, since he knows that Mime would use this to recover the ring ; and the Servitude-motive (2) is heard as he assures his brother that he will not spare him a nail of all the treasure. Angrily Mime protests that he will not share it, but will call Siegfried to help him against the Nibelung. Siegfried emerges from the cave with the wishing-cap and the ring.

" Perchance he will give thee the ring," Mime mocks ; " yet soon I would win it for myself."

To which Alberich replies : " Yet to its lord alone may it belong in the end."

Mime has disappeared into the wood ; now Alberich returns to his hiding-place. The Ring-motive (4) which has accompanied their debate is replaced by the Rhine-maidens' song as Siegfried contemplates his booty. He does not know of what use are the all-powerful treasures that he holds, and which he has taken merely at the dictates of the forest-bird, but thinks they will serve him as a witness of the day's deeds and proof that he has slain Fafner. The Bird's Song appears again with the Forest Murmurs as a burthen, as the little songster warns him not to trust in faithless Mime. But the blood of the

dragon has made it possible for Siegfried to know what is in the elf's heart. Mime now enters and promises himself that he will mislead Siegfried, and cringingly he greets the boy, asking him if he has learned to fear. Siegfried explains that he is sorry that he has killed the dragon, since worse scamps go unpunished, for he hates the one who led him here more than his foe. Mime, in the most friendly fashion, tells him not to repine, since soon he will see the dwarf no more, for his eyes shall be closed in eternal sleep.

"What I needed from thee thou hast fulfilled. Now I will win the booty away from thee. In that I shall not fail, since it is so easy to fool thee."

The dwarf is astonished when Siegfried's reply tells him that the boy has read his thoughts, and his following words are again a revelation of his ill intentions. But Siegfried asks him, in direct reply to these inward musings:

"I gladly hear that thou hatest me, yet must I too indeed give up my life to thee?"

The dwarf nervously protests that he said no such thing, and he brings forth the poisonous draught with a great pretence of friendly forethought, which, however, is belied by the statement which follows:

"If thou but drinkest, I win thy trusty sword, and with it helm and hoard."

The warning Bird-song (32) is again heard as Siegfried asks if then the dwarf intends to rob him of all. Mime offers the potion, meanwhile involuntarily and unconsciously warning Siegfried of its terrible effects and of his determination to hack off his head at the first moment. His actions suggest the most tender consideration for Siegfried as he relates his desire to avenge

the ceaseless scoffing with which Siegfried has greeted his labours. A motive associated with the idea of revenge is joined to this passage, and will reappear in the final drama. Again the bird's warning note is heard, followed by Nibelung-hate, as the dwarf pours the death-draught and offers it to Siegfried.

"Taste thou my sword, loathed boaster," cries Siegfried, and with one stroke of Nothung stretches the dwarf dead at his feet.

Alberich's hateful laughter is heard from the cleft, accompanied by the repeated triplets of the Anvil-motive (Nibelung) (12). Siegfried drags the corpse away, and the Curse-theme (15) recalls the dread fate of the ring's possessor. This painful theme is heard again, together with the Anvil-motive and the Horn-call (30), when, having deposited the body in the cave, Siegfried says:

"In the cavern there, rest on the hoard. Thou didst seek it with steady guile: now mayst thou lord it over the treasure. I give thee, too, a safe guardian to shield thee from thieves."

Therewith he hauls the body of the dragon so that it fills up the cave mouth. Tired and hot with his labours, he stretches himself once more under the lime-tree, and looks up into the branches where the bird is singing; again the Love-longing motive (31) becomes the melody of this song as he speaks of the only beloved companion that he has ever known. He sees the bird with its fellows happily fluttering in the branches, and asks it to find for him a good comrade. A new motive suggestive of the exultant glow of love is introduced with this question, and this theme, together with the Longing, Murmurs and the wild bird's Call, develop

with growing power to the superb climax of this act. The bird announces that it will lead him to a most glorious bride who awaits the coming of a hero who shall awaken her in her fire-girt bed. Siegfried leaps up, the flame of love burning in his heart. He asks the bird if he shall succeed in breaking through the fire, which is indicated by the Loge-motive (9), and the bird tells him that only he who has not felt fear shall succeed. This delights Siegfried, for he knows not fear, although he has sought to learn it of the dragon.

"Now I burn with longing to learn it from Brünnhilde," he tells the bird, and promises to follow its flight.

The bird flutters round and as the music grows to a superb climax in which the bird-song and the glow of love are mingled, it flies off, followed by the exultant hero.

## Act III

The third act of "Siegfried" begins with a prelude in which the restless Wanderer, Wotan, still seeking, despite his growing recognition of the finitude of his will, to achieve his own purposes, asks the Earth-mother for an infallible admonition from the depths of her unconscious intuition.

The prelude betokens all the stormy disturbances of the god's mind. We hear the vagrant and harsh melody of the Ride (22) with the Distress of the Gods (24), the Compact (6), with suggestions, too, of Wotan's Rage and Wandering. Then the beautiful rising theme of the Norns (16) descriptive of Erda is balanced by the descending sign of the Decline of the Gods (17), associated with the idea of *Götterdämmerung*. It should be

observed that these two motives of Erda (16), and the Decline (17), taken together compound a theme very similar to the Gods' Distress (24). The Rhine-motive (1) which is almost the exact counterpart of the Erda-motive, then dominates the prelude, to be displaced by the motive of Eternal Sleep (27), expressive of the deep slumber of the Wala, and as the curtain rises on a rocky precipitous scene dominated by a midnight storm, the Fate (25) and Compact (6) motives are heard as the Wanderer strides forward to call upon Erda to awaken and come from her dark cavern. During Wotan's incantation, the Norn-motive (16) develops and becomes linked with the Decline-motive (17) as Erda, surrounded by her shimmering blue aura, rises from the earth in answer to this incantation, and to the strain of the eternal Sleep-motive (27) asks who awakens her. Wotan tells her that, despite all his wisdom, he has come to her for counsel, but she bids him ask of the Norns, who weave the rope of destiny with the results of her brooding. But Wotan knows that the Norns weave in thrall to the world, and know not and cannot change what they make. He asks of Erda's wisdom how he can hinder a rolling wheel, the Ring-motive (4) and the Renunciation-motive (11b) bespeaking the cause of his inquiry.

" Men's deeds darken my spirit," Erda informs him, " and once I, the all-wise, was constrained by force and bore to Wotan a wish-maiden who should choose out the heroes to aid Wotan. Since this maiden is wise and bold, why dost thou not ask news of the child of Wotan and Erda ? "

The Wala's advice is accompanied with musical reminiscences of the Valkyrie, of Brünnhilde's Sleep, of

Walhall, and of Fate, and the Walhall-motive is again heard followed by the theme of the Wälsung love as the Wanderer tells of Brünnhilde's defiance and fate. Of what avail to question her? The Wala expresses her surprise that the Valkyrie should also be bound by deep sleep as she herself had been, and she significantly asks:

"Does he who taught revolt now punish revolt? Doth he who encouraged the deed now chide it?"

She would resume her slumber, but this Wotan will not permit, and he reminds her that her own prophecy had originally spurred him to the course which he had taken. He asks her how a god may conquer care.

"Thou art not what thou hast called thyself. Why didst thou come, stormy spirit, to disturb the Wala's sleep?"

Wotan replies: "Thou art not what thou dreamst thyself to be. The ancient mother of wisdom nears her end. Thy wisdom wanes, opposed to my will. Knowst thou Wotan's will? I will tell thee that, free of care, thou mayst sleep."

The Götterdämmerung-motive (17) precedes his assurance that he no longer dreads the catastrophe of the gods' decline, for he himself wills this, but he now joyfully brings to pass that which he resolved upon in the pangs of doubt. A new motive is now heard to express the glorious legacy which Wotan, himself vanquished, will bequeath to the world of men. This theme of the World's Heritage (33) which first appears here in powerful emphasis is used extensively at various points during the development of "The Ring." The world which he had bequeathed to Nibelung greed he now decrees shall be the Wälsungs', and the Siegfried (26), Wälsung (19) and Sword (18) motives occur triumphantly.

" Joyous in love, clear of greed, upon him falls bootless Alberich's curse, since fear is a stranger to him," Wotan declares while the Ring-motive (4) indicates the young hero's mighty possession.

He foretells how Siegfried shall awaken Brünnhilde, and thus the Wala's child shall perform the world's redemption. He bids her slumber in peace, for he yields all to the eternally youthful, his spell, " Let the mother of fear and sorrow descend to endless sleep," being signalised by the motive (27). The Bird-song (32) suggests the approach of Siegfried as Erda sinks out of sight. The moonlight floods the stage as the Wanderer awaits Siegfried who, following the bird, now strides into the clearing. The bird has fluttered away, and Siegfried makes up his mind to seek Brünnhilde's rock by himself, but Wotan challenges him. Siegfried asks him his way, and the Wanderer inquires who bade him seek the fell and yearn for womankind. When the boy explains that it was the bird, Wotan asks him how he could know the meaning of its song, and Siegfried relates how, led by Mime, he had slain the dragon with the sword which he himself had forged, but he does not know who made the mighty splinters. The god laughs joyously, but the youth bids him be silent if he cannot help him on his journey. The god bids him respect the aged, but Siegfried tells him an old man stood all his life long in his path, and if now the Wanderer stays him he shall suffer Mime's fate. Siegfried asks him why he wears that great hat hanging over his face, and Wotan significantly replies that that is the Wanderer's way when he goes against the wind. But Siegfried notices that the Wanderer has lost an eye, and suggests that he did so because he stood so defiantly in someone's way; if he

does not leave his path free he may well lose the other. The Walhall-motive (5) is heard as the Wanderer says:

"I see, son, that thou knowest well enough how to aid thyself though thou knowest nought. Thou thyself lookest on the eye that is left to me with that very one which I lack."

Now Siegfried laughs at the old man, and demands that he shall show him the way. The motive of Wotan's Rage (23) recurs at the lad's defiance as he upbraids the youth for his mockery, but the gentler theme of the Wälsung (19) returns as he tells how he had loved Siegfried's race and advises him not to arouse his anger. Darkness enfolds the wood again as the youth orders the greybeard from his path, which the wood-bird had shown him. Wotan angrily tells him that the woodland bird had hastened away knowing that the ruler of the ravens (these birds being associated with Odin in Scandinavian mythology) was at hand. When the boy angrily seeks to pass him, he tells Siegfried that Brünnhilde is prisoned there by his own power, and that he who should wake her would rob him eternally of his power. The Loge-motive (9) is combined with the Rage-motive (23) as he tells how the rock is surrounded by flame, and the Magic Fire (10) leaps up in the orchestra as he points with his spear to the glow which grows brighter and brighter on the heights of the rocks. He threatens that this fire will devour the reckless youth, but to the accompaniment of the courageous Siegfried-motive (26) the boy announces his intention of making his way to Brünnhilde. He is about to stride forward when Wotan interposes his spear:

"If thou dost not fear the fire, let my spear stay thee on thy way," he cries angrily: "my hand still holds the

shaft of dominion which once shattered the sword that thou dost wield. Let it be splintered again on the eternal spear," and the Compact-motive (6) harshly announces the power of Wotan's weapon.

But the Wälsung-theme (19) develops as Siegfried draws his sword and cries :

" Here, then, have I found my father's foe. Splendid revenge promises now. Wield thy spear ; I will shiver it with my sword." The Sword-motive (18) accompanies the blow, which severs the spear-shaft, and there is a terrific thunder-clap as the symbol of Wotan's rule and the dominion of the gods over the world is broken for ever by the impulsive hero. A long-drawn and broken reiteration of the Compact-motive (6) describes the incident. Wotan picks up the broken splinters, and the Norns-motive (16) rises, to fall away in the Decline-motive (17), to be followed by the Renunciation-motive (11b) as the overthrown Wanderer departs. The Wälsung-theme (19) changes into the Siegfried-motive (26) as Siegfried cries :

" The craven flees me with shattered weapon."

The light of the fiery clouds glows more brilliantly, and the whole stage seems to be lit with its sheen as Siegfried joyously hails the glow which lights him on his way. To the strains of the Bird-song (32) he goes forward to bathe himself in the fire, in the fire to find his bride, and with a glad cry and setting his horn to his lips he leaps forward into the flames as the Magic Fire-motive (10) is heard mingled with the receding Horn-call (30), and with the Siegfried-motive (26) he disappears. The fire-clouds sweep forward as he mounts the rock, and the Loge-motive (9) is replaced by the motive of Eternal Sleep (27) as the scene changes.

Gradually the seething light pales before the softer glow of daybreak, and the mist rises, disclosing the summit of the fell as seen in the last act of "Die Walküre." Brünnhilde, in deep sleep, still lies helmeted and shield-covered as Wotan had left her. Siegfried has now reached the heights, and stands in amazement. During the change of scene the music partakes once more of those elements which were heard when Brünnhilde sank to sleep; that is to say, there are reminiscences of the flames that surround her, of Fate, and with these are now intermingled Siegfried's theme and a very beautiful development of the sweet motive associated with Freia, the goddess of love, which phrase signifies the dominant emotion of the coming scene.

During the course of this scene, in which Brünnhilde yields herself to the hero, various new musical constituents are employed, in especial a thrilling progression in triplets indicative of the rapture of love felt by the pair. The impetuosity of the youth and the triumphant delight of both Brünnhilde and Siegfried are indicated by new phrases as well as by some already familiarised by earlier use. The Ride-motive (22) is heard as Siegfried sees Grane slumbering in the wood near by, and as the light shines on Brünnhilde's armour he wonders if this panoply is destined for him. He lifts up the shield and gazes into the face of the maid, which her helmet partly covers. This helmet he carefully removes, and as her hair falls over her breast he gazes enraptured at her, commenting on the beauty of the new-found companion, whom he takes to be a man. Thinking that the mail-coat oppresses the sleeper, he cuts through the birny with the sword, and then Brünnhilde, wrapped in soft feminine draperies, is revealed to him. For the first

time now the fearless one knows fear, and starts back with the cry :

" That is no man."

A rich motive expressive of his passion wells up, and he cries to his mother to aid him as he sinks on to Brünnhilde's breast. There is a long silence. Then he bethinks him of the awakening of the maid, but desire has so disturbed him that he almost fears to waken her. He again approaches the Valkyrie and calls to her, but as she remains sleeping, he decides to kiss her awake, though the touch of her lips kill him. He presses his lips to hers, then, terrified, leaps back as Brünnhilde wakens and looks round in dawning recognition of the earth and sky. A rising passage of limpid clarity and beauty for the wood-wind introduces her salutation of the world, and she asks who is the hero who has awakened her. To the accompaniment of his own motive, Siegfried tells her of his deed. Brünnhilde salutes the race of the gods and the world that she sees spread gloriously around her, and the entranced pair sing a duet of ecstatic praise, a triumphant pæan of their mutual recognition and love. Brünnhilde tells Siegfried how since before his birth she has loved and shielded him.

" Then," Siegfried asks, " did my mother not die ? Did the beloved one but sleep ? "

But Brünnhilde smiles and tells him that his mother will greet him no more. She reiterates her love, for she divines in him the completion of the will of Wotan for which she had striven and suffered. Siegfried cannot understand her words, but he is aflame with her beauty, the quick-moving theme of love's perplexity, with its cumulative triplets, expressing his impetuous desire,

which causes Brünnhilde softly to turn away her head. The Ride-motive (22) is heard as she sees Grane, her steed, now awakened, and there is a touch of regret as she looks upon her shield and helm. Siegfried tells her how she has wounded him and how he came unarmed, and he begs her to quench the fire that burns in his heart. As he fiercely embraces her, she escapes from his arms and tells how no god had touched her and how the heroes bowed before her. The Walhall-motive (5) is heard as she reminds him that she came pure from the burg, and she bewails the disgrace which is now her lot. Siegfried urges her to forgetfulness, and in response to his hot wooing she feels her wisdom failing her, for she realises in the depths of her intuition that all is not well, and the Curse-motive (15) accompanies the description of the terror which darkens so soon her joy. She hides her eyes with her hands, but Siegfried softly unclasps them and bids her override her fears.

"Bright as the sun shines the day of my shame," she cries.

In tones of womanly self-pity she bids him mark her dread, her loving request being stressed by the Wälsung-theme (21), which gives place to a lovely melody descriptive of Brünnhilde's purity as she tells him how she has lived eternally for his sake. Her solo, wherein she recalls her Valkyrie days, is one of the most celebrated of the many famous songs in this great soprano part. Another beautiful melody descriptive of love's happiness is now developed as she conjures the hero not in the frenzy of his passion to bring ruin upon their love, but to leave her.

"Hast thou seen thy face in the clear brook? If the water were stirred, the image were lost."

Thus she would ever be seen by Siegfried as his blest and joyous other self.

"Love thyself," she begs him, "and turn from me."

But Siegfried will hear nothing of this, and he tells her again of his fierce and glad desire. Let the water's face be broken and its waves overwhelm him and quench his longing. Again he bids her awaken to live and laugh.

"Be mine," he cries, "be mine."

She replies that she has ever been his, and would be eternally, but Siegfried cannot understand her beneficent intention, and his more fleshly longing becomes insistent as he begs for close embraces of love. She tells him how passion will drive out heavenly wisdom. The Fate-motive (25) is heard as her mood changes, and she asks him:

"When my glance blazes on thee, art thou not blinded, art thou not burned? When my blood stormily streams towards thee, dost thou not feel the wild fire?" The Valkyrie-motive (22) accompanies her endeavour to terrify the dauntless lover by the vehemence of her passion, and she embraces him madly. But Siegfried, intoxicated with delight, tells her that his fear is at an end, his words being accompanied by the Siegfried-motive (26), followed by the Bird-song (32), reminiscent of his search for a loving companion. Brünnhilde, now freed from his arms, laughs wildly and, to the tune of the Valkyries' cry, greets the child of delight, the fond lord of noblest deeds, whom she must love.

"Laughing," she cries, "let us be lost, laughing go down to death."

The two, now completely a prey to the overwhelm-

ing emotion of mortal passion, exultantly proclaim their love, and, with the prophetic and paradoxical cry, "Laughing death," on their lips, embrace one another as the waxing triumph of the orchestra sweeps to its ecstatic and swift climax.

# CHAPTER VIII

## "GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG"

### ACT I

THE fourth and last music-drama of "The Ring" cycle (the third day of the festival) completes the history of the Wälsung race and of the downfall of the gods. It begins with a prologue which falls naturally into two parts, the first comprising the Norns scene, and the second the farewell of Brünnhilde and Siegfried. The prelude opens with a brilliant reminder of Brünnhilde's greeting of the world on her awakening. This gives place at once to the Norns-motive (16) and to the undulatory reminiscence of the Rhine.

The curtain rises on the same rocky fell as formed the scene of the last act of "Siegfried." It is night. The three Norns are spinning the thread of destiny, the destiny alike of gods and men, in the darkness of the night that is only broken by the glow of firelight in the distance. Their work at various points throughout the scene is expressed by a wandering theme for the strings, a motive of the golden rope of fate. There is a suggestion of the death-theme as one of the Norns inquires whether that light heralds the day.

"It is only Loge's army flaming round the fell," is the answer, "but why do we not sing and spin?"

"If we spin and sing, whereon shall we stretch the rope?"

The first Norn ties the golden rope to a bough of the sheltering fir-tree, and sings how once she wove at the foot of the World-Ash, from whose stem burgeoned a wide-flung and glorious wood in whose shade a stream flowed. Thither came a bold god and drank, paying an eye as eternal tribute. He broke a bough, and of it made his spear-shaft, the Compact-motive (6) accompanying the reference to the spear, but the wound wasted the tree's life and it died, and the theme of the Decline (17) reappears here. The stream dried, and the Norns must use the fir-tree instead of the World-Ash on which to fasten the rope. She hands the rope over to her sister as the soft Death-melody is again heard. The ash and the fir-tree may be taken as the symbol of the race of gods and of men respectively.

The second Norn tells how Wotan carved the runes of his bargains in his spear, and, when it was broken by a bold hero, ordered the heroes from Walhall to fell the World-Ash, so that the fountain of wisdom was ruined for ever. She throws the rope to the third Norn, once more to the accompaniment of the Death-motive. The third sister tells how Wotan sits in the burg with gods and hallowed heroes, surrounded by the piled boughs of the ash. When this wood burns, it will be the dawning of the gods' end. Again the notes of the Gods' Decline (17) accompany this prophecy. Can it be that that day is dawning now? asks the first Norn, who recalls how once before her sight was dimmed with sorrow as she saw the fire-god, whose presence in their discourse is signalised by the Loge-motive (9). She is told how Loge became the slave of Wotan and, when he sought to free himself by gnawing the runes from the spear-shaft, was prisoned about the fell where he now glows.

The Sleep-motive (27), reminiscent of the slumber into which the Norns' mother, Erda, has already sunk, is heard together with the Fate-motive (25) as they pass the rope from one to another.

The first Norn can perceive no more, the rope's threads are becoming unravelled. The motives of the Ring (4), of Alberich's Renunciation (11b), and the Song of the Rhine-daughters appear as she speaks of Alberich's theft, but when she asks news of this the frayed rope cannot be wound, for the curse of revenge gnaws at its mouldering strands, the motive of the Ring (4) suggesting the cause of this tragic happening. The third Norn quickly seizes the rope and seeks to tie it, but her efforts and those of her sisters are of no avail. The Curse-motive (15) and Götterdämmerung-motive (17) are heard as the rope breaks, and the sisters draw together in the midst of the scene, tie the rope around their bodies, and to the accompaniment of the Fate (25) and Eternal Sleep (27) themes sink down to join their slumber-locked mother.

The second part of the prologue is introduced by a musical prelude which not only expresses the gradual dawning of the day, but also brings us in contact with several new motives illustrative of the splendid partnership of Siegfried and Brünnhilde, whose troth-plighting and parting are the gist of the scene. Musically the brief but important scene is, like the whole of "Götterdämmerung," of considerable complexity, for, in addition to a certain amount of new thematic material which he introduces, Wagner recapitulates extensively from the musical ideology of the preceding works. Three new themes of principal note are brought into this section of the work: they are the Brünnhilde-motive (34), the

motive of Siegfried's heroism (35), and that of the Espousal (36). All three are used to some purpose in the ensuing scenes, and it is interesting to note in passing that the theme of Heroism (35) is a harmonic development of the simpler melody of the Horn-call (30), which perfectly expresses the difference between the wild boy of the woods and the mature Siegfried, who has profited by the wisdom and heroic love of the peerless daughter of Wotan.

The interlude is built up mainly of this heroic theme and that of the Ride (22), and these give place to Brünnhilde's motive (34) as she tells him that now she must send him forth to deeds of renown. Siegfried is fully armed, and she has taught him the hallowed runes which she learned from her divine associates, and yielded to him all her maiden strength. He swears to love her eternally, the rich theme of the Espousal (36) being united with Brünnhilde's motive (34) as he tells her the one lesson he has truly learned is to remember her. She bids him remember, too, his heroism. He will leave her alone in her fire-girt fastness, and in exchange for the runes which she has taught him he gives her the ring and bids her guard it in token of his love, which she promises to do. There are reminiscences here of the Ring, of the Valkyries' Ride, and of the Rhine-daughters' Song, followed by the Ride-motive (22) as she bids him take her steed Grane, who once traversed the high heavens with her, but now will obey Siegfried.

" Then all my triumphs will be thine," Siegfried assures her. " Since I ride thy horse and shelter behind thy shield, Siegfried am I no more, but Brünnhilde's arm."

" O, that Brünnhilde were thy spirit ! " she cries.

The delirious motive of freedom is now echoed from the former opera, suggesting the joyousness in the youth's heart as he sets forth on his adventure. They protest their indivisible unity, and in a superb crescendo bid each other hail and farewell. Siegfried leads Grane downward from the fell. Brünnhilde looks down on him from the crag, waving encouragingly to him. A long orchestral movement of great beauty unfolds as Brünnhilde watches the departure of her lord, the motives of Espousal, of the Ride, Heroism, the Brünnhilde-motive and the Horn-Call forming a part. These reach their climax in the theme descriptive of the union of Brünnhilde and Siegfried which terminated the last drama, " Siegfried." The curtain falls here, but the orchestra continues and develops the famous interlude known to concert-goers as " Siegfried's Journey to the Rhine," of which it is a vivid panoramic expression.

The journey is dominated by the Horn-call (30), which first appears simply, but afterwards is given to other instruments in a kind of merry jog-trot indicative of the easy pace at which Grane takes her new master. There are reminiscences of the Loge-motive (9) and of the wooing of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. Then as the Rhine is approached the orchestra develops its various musical themes, including the Rhine-daughters' Song, the Ring (4), and the Rheingold (3) motives, with occasional use of the Renunciation (11b) and Servitude (2) motives, which, however, do not break the happy mood which culminates in the Rhine-daughters' praise of the gold as the curtain rises on the Hall of the Gibichungs, the home of Gunther, his sister Gutrune, and their half-brother Hagen.

The back of this apartment is wide open and gives on

to a natural landing-place at the river's edge, protected by rocky heights. The three sit at the table discussing the fame of the Gibichung race. Hagen is, of course, the son of the mother of Gunther and Gutrune, Grimmhilde, who was seduced by Alberich. His function in this drama is to carry on the Nibelung revenge, and his harsh nature is suitably expressed by his motive, as is the superior and friendly nature of the Gibichungs by its own motive, both of these being heard often throughout the play.

Gunther ascribes to Hagen's wisdom a notable part of the success of his race, but Hagen tells him of rewards that may yet be won, and reminds him that both Gunther and Gutrune are unwedded. He considers Brünnhilde should be Gunther's bride, and tells how she lies surrounded by fire on the rock, but, be it noted, he does not disclose the fact of her espousal to Siegfried. He reveals, however, that only the Wälsung has the power to win her, insomuch as he is the most renowned hero of the world by virtue of his conquest of the dragon, which Hagen relates to the accompaniment of the allied motives. He advises, moreover, that Gutrune should be wedded to Siegfried. Gunther has heard of a precious treasure, the Nibelung hoard, which Hagen tells him confers measureless might.

Gunther suspects Hagen's advice, but is attracted by the suggestion which Hagen makes to him that, if Siegfried would bring Brünnhilde hither, Gunther might have her for his bride. Here we hear the motive of the Tarnhelm (13) associated with one of Forgetfulness (37), for Hagen conceives how, by means of a magic potion which shall stir in Siegfried a desire for Gutrune and forgetfulness of Brünnhilde, and also by

the use of Tarnhelm, his dark plan for obtaining the ring may be achieved.

"But how shall we find Siegfried?" Gunther inquires. The Horn-call (30) enters merrily as Hagen tells how the Wälsung approaches, and Gunther promises him an eager welcome as he hears Siegfried's horn sounding.

Hagen strides out to the river-bank and dramatically tells of Siegfried's approach in a boat. The Song of the Rhine-daughters is wedded to the Rhine-motive (1) as he describes how the hero drives the boat forward through the waters, and the Sword-motive (18) is followed by the Ring-motive (4) as he assures Gunther that this must be Siegfried, to whom he cries out, asking him whither he goes and welcoming him. The hero brings the boat to land, Gunther joins Hagen on the shore, Gutrune, still in her high seat, watches the men as they approach, and goes in obvious perplexity into an inner apartment, the theme associated with Allurement being here employed. This theme, like that of Forgetfulness, to which reference has already been made, has a certain basic similarity to the sweeter Gutrune-motive, and all three are extensively used during the tragic happenings which follow.

Siegfried greets the Gibichung, of whose fame he has heard, and challenges him to fight or to be his friend. Gunther chooses the latter. Siegfried is curious that Hagen should have called him by his name, and asks him if he has seen him before, the question being accompanied by the Curse-motive (15). Hagen tells him that he knew him by his deeds, and leads Grane away as the themes of Brünnhilde (34), the Ride (22) and the Espousal (36) are heard. A motive indicative of hospi-

tality is now introduced as Gunther eagerly welcomes the hero. Siegfried has only his sword to pledge against Gunther's generosity, but Hagen reminds him of the Nibelung treasure. Siegfried tells that he had left the treasure where it lay, save for Tarnhelm and the ring. Hagen tells him of Tarnhelm's magic, and Siegfried says that it is in the keeping of a peerless woman. Gunther resumes his lavish offers of property and service as, heralded by her charming motive, Gutrune in turn welcomes the guest and presents to him the drink-horn. There is something of prophetic irony in Siegfried's acceptance, and the words which accompany his acceptance, of the potion, for there are musical suggestions of the love music followed by his own motive as he cries :

" Though I should forget all that thou gavest me, one lesson I will never forget. I raise this first drink to my true love, to thee, Brünnhilde," therewith draining the treacherous draught.

The motive of Forgetfulness (37) recurs as Gutrune takes the drinking-horn from him and, perplexed and ashamed, drops her eyes, while he raises his to hers and asks :

" O thou who didst burn me with the beam of thine eyes, why dost thou drop thine eyes before me ? "

The alluring Gutrune-theme continues ; then, as blushing she raises her glance, Siegfried tells his new hot passion, and he asks her if she would refuse him if he pleaded for her favour. She is overcome with shame and retires, the Curse-motive (15) being heard as Siegfried, carefully watched by Hagen and Gunther, stares after her. He asks Gunther if he is wed, but the Gibichung replies that his heart is set on one woman, and that she is on a rock surrounded by fire, through which

he may not break. His words, which Siegfried repeats senselessly phrase by phrase, are accompanied by the Magic Fire motive (10) and by the Bird Song (32). The potion, indicated by the Forgetfulness-motive (37), has done its work well, since even this fails to rouse Siegfried's memory. To the strains of the Loge-motive (9) he swears to conquer the fire, free the bride for Gunther, and win Gutrune as his wife.

The rite of blood-brotherhood is performed, each cutting his arm with a sword and mingling the blood with the wine in a drink-horn, to which each lays two fingers while Hagen holds it out between them, the Compact-motive (6) stressing their bond. They drink from the horn, which Hagen then cleaves in two with the sword, and they shake hands. Siegfried notes that Hagen takes no part in this oath, and the Anvil-motive (12), that of the Ring (4) and Renunciation (11b) are heard as the Nibelung's son tells how his cold and impure blood, which would surely poison Siegfried, must not share in such fiery bonds. Siegfried is all haste to get away, and tells Gunther that they shall be but one night on the journey. He refuses to rest until his task is performed.

While they prepare the boat for departure, Hagen takes his spear and sword. Gunther bids him guard the hall. Gutrune re-enters and asks whither they hasten. Hagen tells her, and bids her mark with what speed Siegfried hastens to make her his wife. The Gutrune-motive continues sweetly as she cries : " Siegfried, mine," and returns, much moved, to her apartment.

As Wälsung and Gibichung make their way down the river, Hagen is left darkly brooding as he sits armed before the hall, his evil intentions suggested by the

theme of Nibelung hate. This great bass song is supported by most varied musical material, the themes of Siegfried (26), the Gold (3), Servitude (2), Renunciation (11b), and reminiscences of the Valkyrie (22) being interwoven.

"Siegfried now braves perils for Gunther, and brings his own bride to the Rhine, but to me he brings the ring. Sail happily away, joyous comrades, sons of freedom. Though ye deem me base, yet shall ye serve the son of the Nibelung."

The curtain falls and an interlude continues to use these and other motives, especially the Ring (4) and Compact (6), as it leads to the third scene, immediately before which the Brünnhilde-motive (34) is heard in close association with the Curse (15) and the Ring (4) themes.

This scene is the same rocky height as was seen in the Prologue. Here Brünnhilde is sitting lost in loving contemplation of the ring, her delight insistently suggested by passages of the love-music from the former scenes. Overcome with blissful memories, she covers the ring with kisses. The distant note of a storm and reminders of Valkyrie themes recall her Valkyrie days, and soon Waltraute's voice calls to her. To stormy harmonies, Brünnhilde bids her tether her horse and notes her troubled appearance, and the Death-motive is heard as Waltraute tells her that she comes only on her account. In a solo of great beauty, Brünnhilde relates her lot since last the sisters met, and asks whether her happy fate has lured her sister. But Waltraute has come, breaking Wotan's commands, in terror, and she tells Brünnhilde how the whole order of Walhall is changed since she was sentenced, how the Valkyries ride no

more to choose the heroes, and how Wotan had wandered long in the world, eventually returning with a broken spear-shaft; how he ordered the heroes to fell the World-Ash, and its splinters were piled round the burg, while the host of eternals were ranged round his throne. And thus he sits, silent and grave, with the shattered spear-shaft in his grasp, no more partaking of the golden apples.

Waltraute vividly describes the consternation of her sister Valkyries, and tells how, weeping, she pressed herself to Wotan's bosom, whereat he remembered Brünnhilde, and, sighing and as though dreaming, told her how god and world might be saved if the ring were restored to the Rhine-maidens. Then Waltraute had secretly mounted her horse and ridden away to ask Brünnhilde to end the grief of the gods.

Brünnhilde tells her that she is no more of the company of Walhall: what does the wild sister wish of her? —and the Ring-motive (4) reappears continually as Waltraute hastily begs Brünnhilde to cast it away from her and to return it to the Rhine-daughters. Brünnhilde will not hear of this, but Waltraute repeats her prayer. Brünnhilde tells the Valkyrie of the love which Waltraute has never known, and which she holds of more worth than all the glory of the gods, for Siegfried's love shines happily from the ring to her. Let Waltraute return to the gods and tell them that they shall never rob her of her ring nor her love, though Walhall's splendour should collapse in ruins.

Here we meet with a tragically altered version of the Walhall-motive (5), which touchingly depicts the plight to which Wotan's errors have reduced the godly race. Waltraute departs overwhelmed with grief, and Brünn-

hilde watches her go, the Valkyrie themes giving place to the Magic Fire (10) and Loge (9) motives as the flames leap up, and in the distance Siegfried's horn (30) can be heard, coupled with the Siegfried-motive (26). Brünnhilde rushes to meet him as he leaps out of the flames, but, with a terrible cry of "Betrayed!" she draws back, the Hagen-motive and Tarnhelm (13) indicating the reason of her terror. For, by the power of the wishing-cap, Siegfried has changed himself into the appearance of Gunther. The changed hero demands that she shall follow him, the motive of Forgetfulness (37) reminding us of the source of the change in his character as well as in his form.

In deep distress, Brünnhilde realises at last the horror of Wotan's punishment, and when he tells her that she must belong to him, the Ring-motive (4) and the power of the Gold (3) support her contention that the ring that she wears protects her. She threatens him with her power, but to the theme of the Curse (15) he defies her. They struggle, and he tears the ring from her finger.

The themes of Servitude (2), the Curse (15), Espousal (36) and recollections of their love, together with the Tarnhelm (13) and Brünnhilde (34) motives, sound as they grapple, and eventually she sinks overcome to the ground. Again the theme of Forgetfulness (37) is heard as he proclaims her Gunther's bride and bids her lead him to the cavern, the theme of Nibelung hate being followed by her own nobly pathetic motive (34) as she accedes to his command. Then the Sword-motive (18) is heard as he draws Nothung, and, speaking in his own natural voice, while the Compact-motive (6) reminds us of the bargain which he struck with Gunther, he cries:

"Now, Nothung, bear witness that I wooed loyally. Guarding my troth with my brother, protect thou his bride for me."

He follows Brünnhilde into the cave, the motive of the Sword, which is to divide this predestined pair, and of the Tarnhelm and Forgetfulness, by whose magical powers this tragic mishap has come about, being given out in conjunction with the Brünnhilde-motive as the scene closes.

## Act II

The brief introduction, full of the tragic import of Nibelung malevolence and Servitude, leads to one of the most terrible and menacing scenes which the mind of the master-dramatist has ever evoked. In the moonlight can be discerned, at one side, the bank of the Rhine, and at the other the Gibichung hall, the background consisting of rocky heights, up which several precipitous paths wind. On the rocks are altars raised to Fricka, Donner, and Wotan. Leaning against a pillar of the hall, sleeping, is Hagen, and his father, Alberich, cowers, leaning, against his knee.

Weirdly pathetic, and in a measure ghoulishly horrible, is the affection of the forswearer of love for the son born of his constraining lust, and the dread effect of their debates is heightened by the fact that Wagner has made Hagen reply all the time as if asleep, yet with his eyes wide open, an indication of the eternal watchfulness of the evil children of darkness. Hagen's hatred of his father and mother is made clear almost by his first words, and Alberich delights in the joylessness of his son, since this shall aid him to bring to nought the gods,

so that he and his offspring may share the dominion which the ring confers. Alberich's words give rise to a motive of Murder, which reappears at various intervals later in the drama. He tells how Siegfried knows nothing of the power of the ring which is his.

"Laughing in ardour of love, he burns himself living away; only his undoing can stead us now."

"He serves me already for his own undoing," answers Hagen.

Alberich tells him that the ring must be recovered from Brünnhilde for fear that Siegfried should return it to the Rhine-daughters. He implores Hagen to swear to recover it, and his son agrees, the Curse-motive (15) combined with Nibelung-hate and Servitude (2) being heard as he disappears, his voice fading on the words: "Be true, true, true."

Still Hagen sits motionlessly staring towards the river as, with an orchestral interlude of great beauty, the sun rises. The limpid and flowing strains culminate in the Horn-call (30) as Siegfried suddenly steps out in his natural shape. He takes off Tarnhelm and hangs it at his belt, lustily wakens Hagen, and tells how a pair follow him from Brünnhilde's rock. Hagen summons Gutrune, who comes out of the hall—a new theme, that of the call to the wedding, being heard here for the first time. This Wedding Summons is a slight variant of the theme used in conjunction with Gutrune, but is more sharply dramatised in its tempo and instrumentation. Gutrune questions him concerning the winning of Brünnhilde, and he tells her how by the magic cap he succeeded, yet remained true to his Gibichung love. In the mist which hung around the fell as he and Brünnhilde came down in the morning, Gunther had replaced

him at Brünnhilde's side, and he had wished himself, by means of Tarnhelm, back at the Gibichung hall, whither a strong wind now drives the betrothed couple down the Rhine in his ship. Gutrune gives voice to her fear of the mighty hero, the Forgetfulness-motive (37) suggesting the reason for this fear. Hagen tells that he sees a sail.

"Then give the messenger thanks," cries Siegfried.

Gutrune, to the theme of the Marriage-call, speaks of the need of making all ready for Brünnhilde's reception. She bids Hagen call together the vassals, while she herself will invite the women.

"Wilt thou not rest, faithless hero?" she asks Siegfried.

"To help thee is my rest," he answers, and follows her into the hall.

There now succeeds a section of savage exaltation and compelling, though simple, musical structure as Hagen, to the triumphant Wedding Summons, calls together the Gibich vassals. He winds his horn, and from all directions horn-calls are heard in response as from the heights and valleys the fierce warriors, fully armed, hasten to the hall of their lord Gunther, round which they swarm asking what strife, what need, calls them together. Hagen tells them that Siegfried has kept Gunther safe, and when they ask why, then, the host is summoned, he tells them that they shall sacrifice sturdy steers to Wotan, a boar for Froh, a goat for Donner, and sheep for Fricka. The men burst into wild laughter at the trick that has been played upon them by Hagen.

"The Rhine laughs now with weal and joy, for grim Hagen becomes a jester! The hedge-thorn (Hagedorn) no longer pricks, for he is turned now into a wedding-herald."

Hagen sharply bids them be serious and guard the bride, and prepare terrible vengeance for any who wrong her. The vassals go to the shore and bring to land the boat, which, bearing Gunther and Brünnhilde, has now approached. They give an uproarious greeting to their lord, who introduces to them his bride, who follows him pale and downcast. Then he greets Siegfried and Gutrune, and as he speaks of Siegfried, to a musical setting of considerable dramatic significance, introducing the Sword (18) and Fate (25) motives, Brünnhilde, horrified, looks up at the hero, takes one pace towards him, and, overcome, starts back, staring at him. All present are astonished and ask what is wrong. The motive of Forgetfulness (37) is heard as Siegfried approaches her and asks :

" What troubles Brünnhilde's glance ? "

He tells her that he is to marry Gutrune, and she Gunther, whereat she falls fainting into his arms, and the Brünnhilde-motive (34) is heard with wonderfully poignant effect as she asks him if he does not know her. She sees the ring on his finger, and its motive (4) and that of the Curse (15) recur as horror at this treachery dawns on her. The theme of Nibelung-hate continues throughout the ensuing passage as Hagen advises the vassals to mark what Brünnhilde says.

She tells how the ring was wrested from her by Gunther, and wonders how it came on Siegfried's hand, demanding that Gunther take it again from Siegfried. When Gunther tells that he never gave it, she proclaims Siegfried the traitorous thief who stole it. Siegfried protests that he won it conquering Fafner, and again the Nibelung-hate emerges as Hagen demands that the traitor atone. Brünnhilde cries out against this treachery,

the cry being echoed questioningly by Gutrune and the vassals, and the Walhall-motive (5) reappears as Brünnhilde asks of the gods if they have decreed this, and calls upon them for vengeance. She begs them all to witness that not to Gunther, but to Siegfried, was she mated. Throughout this scene a considerable use is made of the Vengeance-motive, the sharply-descending motive which first appeared in connection with the death of Fafner. Siegfried protests that he never broke the bond of blood-brotherhood, and the Sword (18) and Compact (6) motives underline his asseveration as he tells how Nothung parted the sorrowing bride from him.

"Crafty hero, how thou liest!" cries Brünnhilde. "How miserably thou callest thy sword to witness! Well I know its sharpness, but well, too, know I the sheath wherein so happily it rested when the trusty friend Nothung hung on the wall when its lord had won his true-love."

The motive of the Espousal (36) is used here and later in the scene with tragic contrast. The vassals angrily assemble, commenting on this breach of faith. The two Gibichungs demand that Siegfried give Brünnhilde the lie. Siegfried asks for a spear to witness his oath, and the Vengeance-motive is heard in conjunction with Servitude (2). The vassals close in a ring around Siegfried, and Hagen holds out the point of his spear, upon which Siegfried lays his right hand as, to the accompaniment of the Vengeance and Hagen themes, which later give place to the Murder-motive, he swears his oath.

"Spear-point, witness my word. If ever edge hews me, hew thou me. If ever death finds me, find thou me,

if the woman's plaint is true, if I broke my oath to my brother."

The Ride-theme (22) is heard as Brünnhilde angrily snatches Siegfried's hand from the spear, and in turn swears her oath :

" I bless thy point that it may pierce him for all his vows he broke and now hath falsely sworn."

The vassals call on Donner to silence by storm his disgrace, and the sweet theme of Espousal (36) heralds a solo of great beauty, in which Siegfried conjures Gunther to guard and give rest to the wild mountain-maiden whose rage has been roused by some sorcerer. Let the vassals leave women to scold. The sinister motive of Tarnhelm (13) accompanies his expression of regret for beguiling Brünnhilde. The wedding summons sounds gaily as, in happy mood, he tells of the day's joyousness, takes Gutrune on his arm, and leads her into the hall followed by the vassals.

The joyous motivation swiftly changes, and the themes of the Curse (15), Renunciation (11b), Nibelung-hate, Forgetfulness (37), Servitude (2), and the gloomy Murder-motive introduce the next movement of the act, during which Brünnhilde, Gunther, and Hagen, left alone, prepare their revenge. The themes of vengeance and murder are assorted with reminiscences of her love as Brünnhilde ponders what rune remains hidden from her, and regrets the wisdom which she has sacrificed to her lover, which would have enabled her to unravel the mystery. Hagen offers to help her and reminds her that Siegfried was forsworn on his spear. He seeks counsel of Brünnhilde how the Wälsung may be undone. Brünnhilde tells him that Siegfried is protected by her counsels and nothing could withstand him in battle,

but, knowing that he would never turn his back on a foe, she had not guarded his back with her blessing.

"There my spear shall strike," cries Hagen, and he rallies Gunther, who remains sunk in shameful grief.

Brünnhilde upbraids her lord bitterly, but Gunther, carried away, cries:

"I, the deceiver, am deceived; I, the betrayer, am betrayed," and wildly begs help of Hagen.

"Nor brain nor hand help us here, only Siegfried's death," is Hagen's reply, the Vengeance-motive accompanying his stirring words. "Only that can avenge thy shame."

But Gunther recalls the bond of blood-brotherhood and doubts if he is really betrayed. Brünnhilde instigates him to vengeance, and Hagen reminds him of the might of the ring which he would win if Siegfried were killed, the Ring (4) and Renunciation (11b) motives recalling the Nibelung treasure.

Gunther sighs sadly: "Must this be Siegfried's end?" the Gutrune-theme entering sweetly as Gunther asks how he can thus assail his sister's spouse.

The reference to the Gibichung maid seems to enlighten Brünnhilde, and she speaks bitterly of Gutrune, to whom she ascribes her own misfortune. Hagen suggests that, when they go hunting the next day, Siegfried might well be attacked by a boar, thus hiding the deed from Gutrune. On this the three agree, and a trio of great dramatic power develops as they voice their different desires, for Brünnhilde and Gunther are both dominated by noble and heroic aims, while Hagen is greedy for the power of the ring. As the Gibichung and the warrior maid cry: "Purged be the shame: let him atone his breach of holy vows," and call on Wotan, the

dark son of the Nibelung glories in the downfall of the Wälsung and acclaims Alberich the Nibelung lord.

But both their last cry vowing revenge and his for lordship of the ring are accompanied by the sombre theme of the murder. The wedding summons rings out joyously as boys and maidens waving flowers come from the hall leading the marriage procession. The vassals carry in Siegfried on a shield and Gutrune on a seat. On the rocky heights in the background servingmen and maidens lead the sacrificial animals, decked with flowers, to the altars. The horns blow lustily as the women summon Brünnhilde to accompany Gutrune. The motives of Servitude (2) and Vengeance mingle strangely with the wedding music as Brünnhilde, seeking escape, is led to Gunther by Hagen. Gunther is raised on another shield, and the procession starts for the heights as the curtain falls, the jubilant Marriage-theme being quenched with a swift announcement of the cruel theme of Vengeance.

## Act III

The third act is introduced by music employing all the typical material associated with the Rhine and the three maidens, who, reft of their beloved gold, continue to seek the return of the treasure to its predestined abiding-place. Their undulations and their songs are intermingled, however, with the joyous Horn-call (30), as though these simple children of the water anticipated that the care-free woodland boy might yield them the power which he unwittingly possesses. With the Horn-call and the water-music are mingled the Wedding Summons and the Servitude-motive (2).

The scene is a wild valley, and in the background flows the Rhine, in which the three Rhine-daughters seem to be swimming in a circle, as it were, dancing, as they sing their greeting of the day and their regret for its departed brightness, the Rheingold, which they hope the hero will restore to them. The Horn-motive (30) is heard again, and they disappear as Siegfried, fully armed, appears on the river's brink, having lost his way. The maidens call to him, and, thinking they have enticed away his quarry, he bids them keep their sweetheart. They ask him what, if they find his prey, he will give them, and he tells them he has found nothing. Then they beg of him the ring which he wears on his finger.

The Dragon-motive (14) recurs as Siegfried tells how he won the ring and will not exchange it for a wretched bearskin, and the scene of delicious and childlike raillery continues as he tells them that his wife would scold if he rendered it up. They mock him pitilessly and disappear. Then he relents, takes the ring from his finger, and promises it to them, but, reappearing, they bid him keep it and let the curse have its way. In response to his inquiry, they tell him the story of the ring, but their threats move him less than their guile, and though they warn him that the Norns had woven the curse into the rope of fate, he is undaunted. The motive of the Compact (6) is heard, and it gives place to that of the ring as he cries :

" My sword shattered a spear : if the Norns wove once this wild curse into the endless rope of fate, Nothung shall hew it in pieces."

The Sword-motive triumphantly(18) echoes his trust. He tells how Fafner warned him of the curse, and the

Walhall-motive (5) reappears as he relates how the world's wealth fell to him because of the ring, and for the graciousness of love he would give it to them. But when they threaten life and limb, he will not part with it. Lifting a clod of earth, he throws it over his shoulder, saying :

" Behold, thus I throw far from me life and limb."

The Rhine-maidens call upon one another to leave the fool in his blindness, for he has neglected the wisdom and the safety which were his, the Brünnhilde-motive (34) reminding the auditor of the source of the hero's gifts.

" Noblest weal to him was granted ; he knows not that he has cast it aside. Only the ring that shall slay him will he now guard. A high-souled woman will this day inherit thine all. She will give better ear to us."

They resume their strange song and, re-forming their circle, swim away, the sweet and so perfectly-descriptive music continuing as they disappear in the distance.

" Woman's wiles I now learn are in water as on the land. Who does not trust their charms they seek to scare with threats."

Yet he confesses that the maids were indeed fascinating. The Wedding Summons, the Servitude (2) and Horn (30) motives are heard now as the hunting party approach from the heights, and Siegfried gives them a lusty greeting on his horn. Gunther, Hagen, and several of the retainers are approaching, and Hagen's harsh call heralds their coming. Siegfried welcomes them, and they pile up their hunting spoils and drink is served. Hagen asks Siegfried of his success in the chase, but the hero replies :

" I came hither for woodland hunting, but found

only water-fowl. Had I been prepared, I might well have taken three of them, who sang from the Rhine to me that this very day I should be slain."

The Vengeance-motive accompanies his words darkly. Gunther is troubled. Siegfried drinks, and Hagen asks him whether it is true that he understands the bird's speech (his words being accompanied by reminiscences of the Bird-song (32) ), but Siegfried cares no more for that and bids Gunther drink. But treachery sits heavily on Gunther, and he seems to see his blood-brother's blood in the drink. Siegfried cheerfully bids him mix the bloods, and pours from Gunther's drink-horn into his own till the cup overflows.

" Let that be a libation to Mother Earth."

Siegfried's high spirits fail to infect his friend, however, but Siegfried pledges him, and the Anvil-motive (12) reappears as he promises to tell him stories of his youth. The men crowd round as Siegfried, pressed by Hagen, begins his narration. He tells of his upbringing by Mime, and the simple nursery-rhyme to which reference was made in " Siegfried " reappears as he recapitulates his youth and adventures, this being followed in turn by the Sword-motive (18) and the triumphant octave call, also associated with Nothung, as he tells of the forging. The Wälsung-motive (19) reappears, giving place later to the forest murmurs and the wild bird's song as he resumes his own history, already familiarised in the preceding drama. The vassals are interested, and ply him with questions, and Hagen offers him a drink from his own stoup.

" I have prepared a noble drink to quicken your remembrance shrewdly so that long-past things may not escape you."

Siegfried looks thoughtfully at the cup, and the motives of Forgetfulness (37), Espousal (36), the Wälsungs (19), and Brünnhilde (34) recur in eloquent testimony of his changed state as he drinks the draught which is the antidote to the potion that Gutrune had offered him, and which had robbed him of memory to such tragic purpose. The theme of forest murmurs and the wood-bird's call (32) accompany his narration of his ascent of the Valkyrie rock, and the theme of the Magic Fire (10) is mingled with reminiscences of his and Brünnhilde's love as he tells of his awakening of the Valkyrie maiden. Gunther is amazed, for all his worst fears are realised. Two ravens fly out of the bushes, circle above Siegfried, and are gone.

"Canst thou also interpret those ravens' whisperings?" cries Hagen, pointing to the birds—Wotan's birds, be it noted.

The Curse-motive (15) is heard, combined with that of Servitude (2), as Siegfried starts up and, looking at the birds, turns his back on Hagen, who thrusts his spear into the hero from behind with the words:

"They promise me vengeance."

The Siegfried-motive (26), tragically broken, emerges as the hero raises his shield with two hands to hurl at his treacherous murderer, at whom Gunther and the vassals have leapt. But Siegfried's strength runs out, his shield falls backwards, and he collapses on to it. Gunther and the vassals ask Hagen what he has done.

"Revenged treachery," is his answer.

Therewith he turns and makes his way across the heights, on which twilight is settling. Gunther bends over the dying Siegfried, who, supported by two of the vassals, expires as he sings the praise of his now-remem-

bered love, Brünnhilde. The glorious lyric begins to the accompaniment of Brünnhilde's Awakening, as he begs her to look into his eyes, and the Fate-theme (25) gives place to Siegfried's own (26) as he tells how her awakener comes to break the bonds of sleep. The joyous melodies of their love recur, to give place again to the Fate-motive (25) as he cries : " Brünnhilde bids me welcome," and therewith falls back dead.

The vassals, stricken with grief, raise his corpse on a shield and carry it through the darkening night slowly away to Gunther's hall. The moon breaks through the clouds and lights the funeral procession. Mist rising from the Rhine obscures the whole scene. The sad *cortège* is accompanied by what is generally admitted to be the loftiest expression of tragedy ever created by man.

Siegfried's Funeral March is comparable only in the overwhelming splendour of its tragic conception with the most poignant passages of Greek tragedy, with the farewell speech of Hamlet to his friend Horatio, with the passionate dithyramb of the man of Uz, and in modern works with the epic description of grief in Stravinsky's " Petrouchka," and in some measure with its more direct and human expression in the Epstein sculpture, " A Mourning Woman." This narrative of heroic sorrow, approached, but never transcended, by the master-works of tragic genius, begins with a passage for the drums, principally in triplets, which introduces rising chromatics, again in triplets, for the violas and 'cellos, this oft-repeated theme poignantly insisting on the grief with which this *Trauermarsch* is laden. The title of " Siegfried's Funeral March " is inadequate insomuch as the work is rather a recapitulation of and a sad tribute to the Wälsung race, which, having achieved the down-

fall of the gods and the freeing of the world of men, perishes in its supreme embodiment, the fearless hero Siegfried. In the savage and sanguine development we meet the themes of the Wälsungs (19), with reminiscences of Siegmund and Sieglinde and their Love (20) and the emphatic proud acclaim of the Sword (18). Siegfried's own motive (26) and references to his heroism give place to the delicious lyric mood of Brünnhilde (34). But the dolorous theme of Servitude (2) sweeps aside these more happy recollections, and musical references to the fatal power of the gold precede the baneful Curse-motive (15), that melts into a sadly changed version of Siegfried's Horn-call (30), which in turn gives place to the sad viola and 'cello theme as the funeral oration of the Wälsung race (19) draws to its conclusion with the same melancholy drum-rattle with which it began.

Meantime the mist-clouds are dispelled and the scene has changed to the Gibichung hall as it appeared in the first act. It is night, and the moon is mirrored in the Rhine, which glistens in the background. Gutrune is waiting anxiously for the return of the hero. She has seen a woman go down to the river, and, finding Brünnhilde's room empty, conjectures that she has gone to the Rhine. As Gutrune is about to return to her own apartment she hears Hagen's voice, accompanied by the themes of Servitude (2) and Vengeance, cry :

"Hoi-ho! Awaken. Lights. We bring home the hunting spoil. Hoi-ho!" The theme of Siegfried's Heroism (35) here gives an effect of Attic irony to Hagen's words.

The men and women crowd into the hall with torches, meeting Siegfried's funeral procession, includ-

ing Gunther. Gutrune asks Hagen what they bring, the motive of Siegfried (26) and the Horn-call (30) being followed by the Servitude-motive as Hagen tells her:

"Siegfried thy dead husband they bring, the spoil of a wild boar."

With a cry she throws herself upon the body, now being set down in the midst of the hall. Gunther sorrowfully greets his sister, who wildly thrusts him aside, calling for vengeance on a faithless brother. To the dark theme associated with Hagen, Gunther ascribes the terrible deed to its doer. Reminiscences of the oath-taking on Hagen's spear are heard as he boasts of his deed and claims the ring as its price, the Ring-motive (4) reappearing with his demand, and later, when, in answer to Gunther's question:

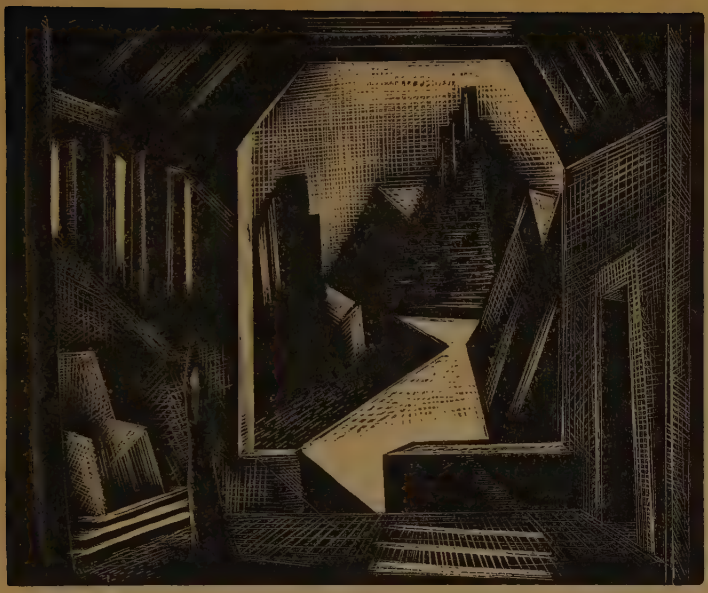
"Dost thou not covet Gutrune's dower, shameless son of the elf?" he replies:

"The elf's son thus claims the elf's heritage."

Here also the Curse-motive (15) recurs. Gunther and Hagen fight, and, despite the intervention of the vassals, Gunther is slain. Hagen exultantly claims the ring, which he would take from Siegfried's hand, but the Sword-motive (18) is proclaimed sharply by the trumpets as a reminder of the heroic power which guards even the dead Siegfried, for the hand of the corpse is raised menacingly, to the consternation of all. Gutrune, who had been overwhelmed by the death of her brother, cries aloud, and, to the theme of the Decline (17), Brünnhilde proudly enters, contemptuously silencing them, for she comes to avenge Siegfried upon his betrayers. She tells Gutrune that she herself was his lawful wife, to whom he had sworn all his vows before ever he saw Gutrune's face. The motive of Forgetful-

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG. *The Hall of the Gibichungs. Last Scene.*

*The hall is open at the back to a prospect of the Rhine. Rocky heights enclose the shore. The interior shows a doorway to the right. To the left are three narrow windows through which moonlight falls on the floor of the Hall.*



ness (37) reappears as the deceived Gibichung curses Hagen for his perfidy, which she now understands. She sinks, overwhelmed with grief, upon her brother's corpse, and Hagen stands leaning on his weapons, sunk in deep contemplation.

Brünnhilde gazes long on Siegfried's face, and now begins the superlative and complex *finale* of this great dramatic tetralogy—complex alike in its musical structure, which employs the most significant thematic elements from the preceding work, and in its ethical and dramatic conception. The proud Valkyrie maiden, who has learned from the Rhine-daughters the fatal happenings which have overthrown her love, bids the vassals pile up a great pyre for Siegfried. The motives of the Magic Fire (10), of Siegfried (26), and of Götterdämmerung (17) follow one another quickly as she bids them kindle a fierce fire to consume Siegfried's corpse. The Ride-motive (22) reappears as she commands them to bring Grane that he, with her, may follow his lord. The younger men obey her orders and build a great pyre on the river-banks, and the women decorate it with a pall and flowers.

Meanwhile Brünnhilde apostrophises Siegfried to a melody reminiscent of their love.

"Purest was he who betrayed me, deceiving his bride; true to his friends, he barred himself from his betrothed by his sword."

The Walhall-motive (5) re-enters as she calls upon the eternals, guardians of vows, to look upon her distress and their shame, and upon Wotan to hear her plaint; and the melancholy theme of Fate (25) reappears as she tells her father, the god, how through treachery she has learned the truth and his will has pre-

vailed. By the raven messengers wheeling above her she sends him the message :

" Rest, rest, thou god."

The Curse-motive (15) gives place to a reminiscence of the song of the Rhine-maidens, and this is replaced in turn by a combination of the themes of Walhall (5) with Wotan's Rage (23) on the 'cello as she signs to the vassals to bear out Siegfried's body. The motive of the Decline (17) follows as she takes the ring from Siegfried's finger, and the Ring-motive (4) succeeds as she cries :

" Now I take to myself my heritage, accursed ring, terrible ring. Now I hold the ring and yield it up."

Reminiscences of the Rhine-daughters' songs and play accompany her apostrophe to the swimming sisters as she bids them claim their own from among her ashes, the idea of the treasure being stressed by a repetition of the Rhine-gold (3) on the horns and trumpet.

" May the fire that consumes me cleanse the ring of its curse."

The happy play of the Rhine-daughters reappears as she bids them guard once more their bright gold, which had been stolen from them to such vengeful purpose, the Curse-motive (15) underlining the evil which now she will annihilate. The Compact-motive (6) recurs sharply as a suggestion of her completion of Wotan's bargain when she takes a torch from one of the vassals and turns to where Siegfried's body lies on the pyre, and the Loge-motive (9) accompanies her words as she bids the ravens return home to Wotan to tell the story of these doings by the Rhine. But she bids them fare first to Brünnhilde's rock, where Loge burns, and guide him to Walhall, and the motive of the Decline (17) enters again as she tells how the twilight of the gods falls.

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" Thus I hurl the brand into Walhall's splendid pile," she cries as she throws the torch into the pyre, which swiftly leaps into flame.

The two ravens fly up from the river-bank, winging their way to Walhall. The motive of the Ride (22) claims the orchestra in its wild courageousness as Grane is led forward and greeted by his loving mistress, who tenderly asks :

" Dost know, my friend, whither I lead thee? Brightly burning in the fire, there lies thy lord."

And here we meet once more the superb theme of Redemption by Love (38) in all its lyric beauty, united with the triumphant Siegfried-motive (26), these being followed again by reminiscences of the Valkyrie (34).

" Dost thou neigh joyfully to follow thy friend? Does the laughing flame lure thee to him? "

And the theme of Magic Fire (10) leaps gladly out, to recur persistently throughout the ensuing climax. But the Redemption-theme (38) forms the melody of Brünnhilde's song as she tells her comrade how the fire warms her heart and shall unite her with Siegfried in mightiest love.

" Heia-ho, Grane," she cries ; " greet thy lord ! "

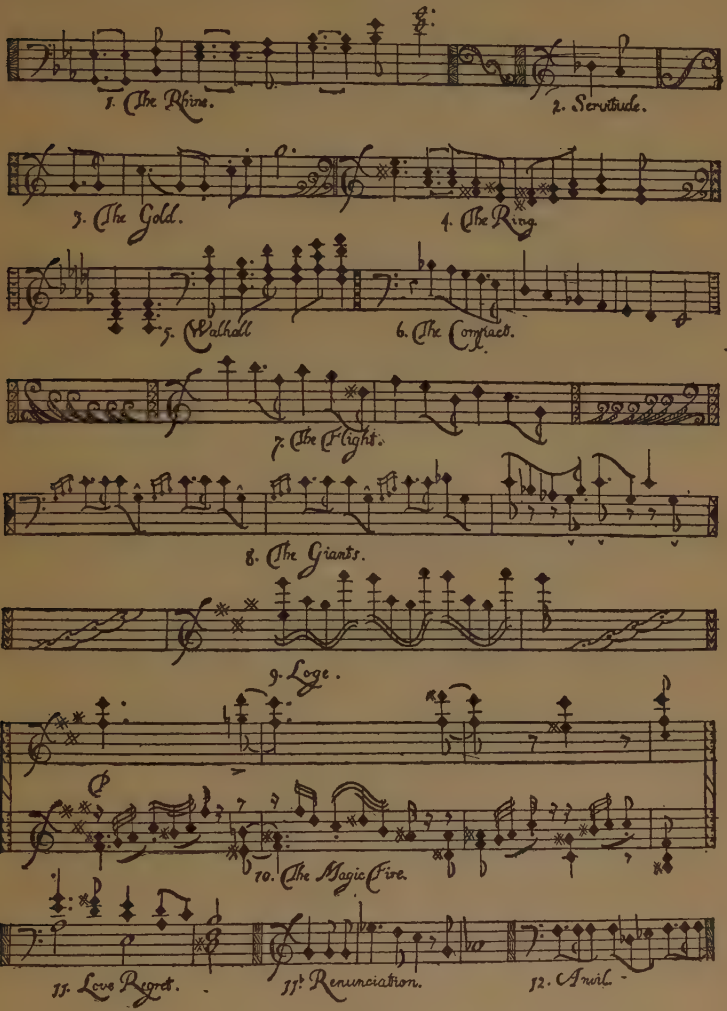
Again the Siegfried-motive (26) is united with the triumphantly-beautiful music of Redemption (38) as she calls upon Siegfried to see how blissfully she hails him, for she has swung herself upon her horse's back, and now, with one bound, she leaps on to the crackling pyre. The flames burn up and bid fair to destroy the Gibichung hall, so that the women crowd back in fear. But suddenly the heap falls together and dies down in a red glow, and the clamorous music of the Magic Fire (10) gives place to a sweetly-gay description of the

Rhine's wavelets, for the river overflows so that its flood sweeps over the remains of the funeral pyre. The three Rhine-daughters swim hither, for they have come to claim the ring which Brünnhilde promised them. Hagen, who has all the time been watching in growing consternation, throws aside spear, shield, and helmet, and hurls himself into the flood crying : " Back from the ring," a broken scrap of the Curse-theme (15) giving point to his words.

But the happy melodies of the Rhine-daughters' play and of their song recur as Wellgunde and Woglinde seize him and drag him to death in the depths of the river, while Flosshilde joyously holds aloft their newly-won treasure. The Walhall-theme (5) reappears as a red glow, gradually brightening, breaks through the clouds of the background, and the Rhine-daughters' music is joyously mingled with that of Redemption (38) as the three maidens are seen swimming in their strange watery dance, playing with the ring. The fiery heavens glow yet more brightly, and the Walhall-theme (5), together with that of Siegfried (26) and the Decline (17), vividly depicts the burning of Walhall's glorious pile among the radiant flames of the World-Ash, as described by Waltraute previously. For the final catastrophe of the gods is now visible in these flaming heavens, and the race of immortals is perishing, with its assembled heroes, in the celestial conflagration. But flames and waves and the glory of the gods and their tragedy give place finally to the heroism and poignancy of Redemption by Love, the supreme and final concept of " The Ring."

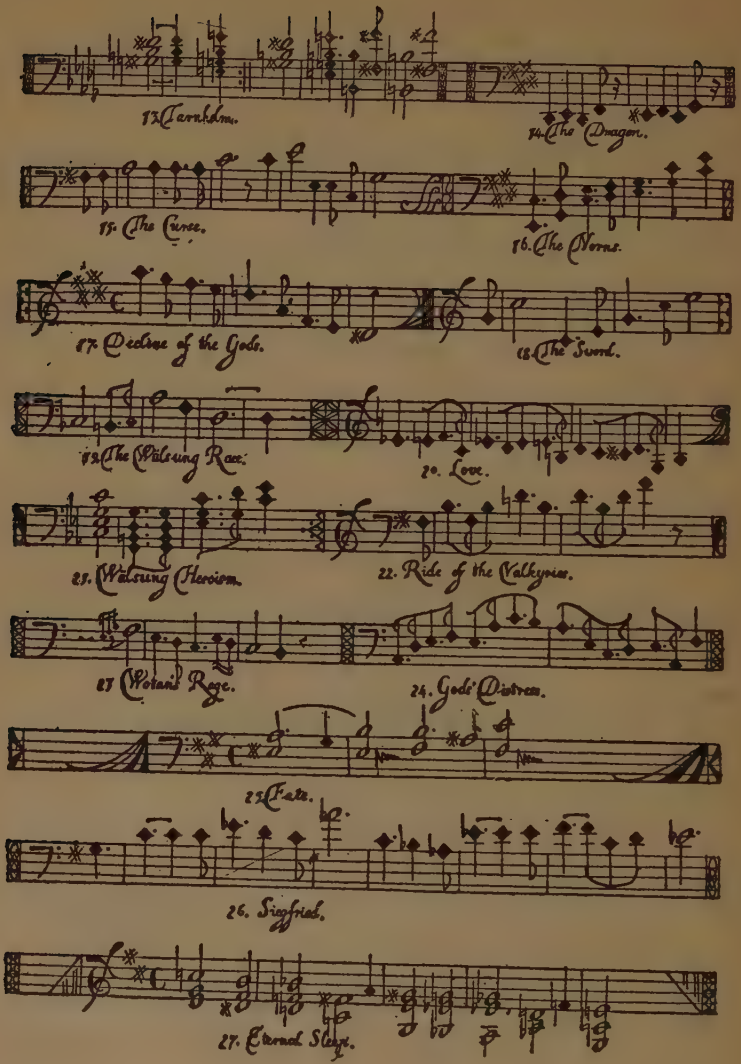
# APPENDIX A

## *The Principal Motives of "The Ring of the Nibelungs"*



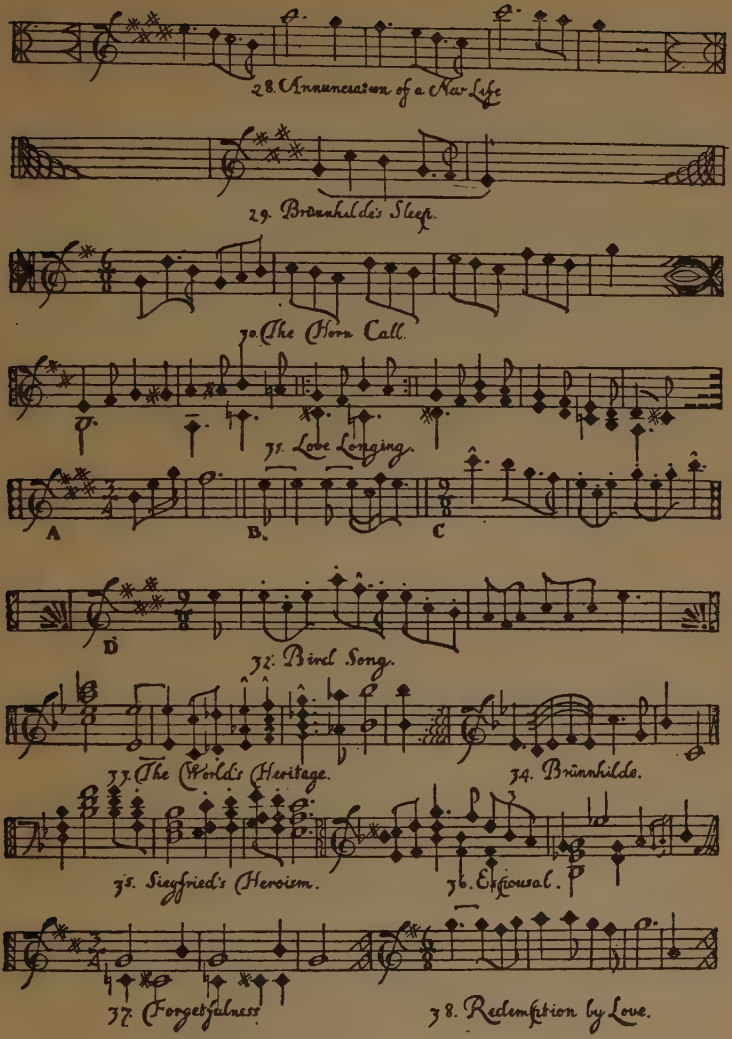
# APPENDIX A

Motives



# APPENDIX A

## Motives



# APPENDIX B

## GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF "THE RING"

Readers who may be desirous of familiarising themselves with the musical content of "The Ring" and studying the Wagnerian method of *leit-motif* can have ready access to a considerable part of Wagner's masterpiece through the many excellent gramophone records now on the market. Modern methods of recording have made it possible for these great orchestral and vocal works to be brought to the fireside without undue loss of tonal realism and æsthetic dignity. It is not the writer's aim to catalogue comprehensively the whole series of "Ring" records which have been reproduced by the various British and Continental firms. But it may serve the Wagnerian amateur if a representative list of discs is appended, and with this in view the following *catalogue raisonné* has been drawn up. Its aim is rather to serve as a brief guide to the records of outstanding musical interest than to stress the excellences of the various singers and orchestras concerned.

On the grounds of accessibility to the ordinary English purchaser, the catalogue is limited to the output of three firms: that of the Gramophone Company (His Master's Voice), the Columbia Gramophone Company, and the German manufacturers of the Polydor discs (whose products, including a large number of "Ring" records are obtainable from their sole London agent, Alfred Imhof, 110, New Oxford Street, London).

More than passing tribute in respect of musical initiative must be paid to the H.M.V. Company, whose fine series of Wagnerian records complements the British National Opera Company's productions of "The Ring," "Tristan," "Die Meistersinger," and "Parsifal." Unexcelled in their reproducing technique and in their dramatic comprehensiveness, although of necessity discontinuous, this British company's "Ring" records, of which there are over a score, represent a significant achievement in the

history of the gramophone. With the addition of a few illustrations of the more dramatic incidents and outstanding solos, this series alone would afford an admirable introduction to the Wagnerian student and serve as an enjoyable reminder of the more æsthetically corporate presentation of this four-fold drama in the opera house.

Several of the Columbia records which deal with the same episodes as those of the other company provide interesting comparisons between the interpretation of other conductors, singers, and orchestras, and the German list with its large number of Wagnerian singers of international fame may be useful to the same end. But in the deft combining of voice and orchestra, and in the maintenance of tone-value and nuances of orchestration, the premier British Company stands unrivalled.

[For the sake of brevity the records of the above-mentioned firms are referred to as H.M.V., Col., and Plr.]

## RHEINGOLD

| Maker. | Catalogue No. | |
|---|---|---|
| H.M.V. | D 677 | This record gives various typical passages from the introductory opera, including Alberich's theft of the gold (see p. 63) and Wotan's and Loge's visit to Nibelheim (p. 72). |
| Plr. | 15849 | The two finely dramatic solos of Loge's part sung by Walter Kirchhoff (pp. 69, 70) admirably illustrate the peculiar character of the god of fire. |
| Col. | L 1427 | Sir Henry J. Wood conducts the New Queen's Hall Orchestra in the " Entrance of the Gods into Walhall " (p. 82). The lordly Walhall theme and the sweetly-regretful music of the mourning Rhine-daughters and the first triumphant introduction of the Sword-motive are finely interpreted. |

## DIE WALKÜRE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| H.M.V. | D 678 | The stormy prelude of " Die Walküre " (p. 83) with Tudor Davies as Siegmund and his first sight of the sword is powerfully conducted by Albert Coates. |

# APPENDIX B

| Maker. | Catalogue No. | |
|---|---|---|
| H.M.V. | D 679 | Eugene Goossens conducting the companion record to the above including the gaining of the sword and Siegmund's love-song (p. 88). |
| Col. | A 1451 | Olive Fremstad sings a love-song of Sieglinde's (p. 88). The record also includes this great soprano's rendering of Brünnhilde's battle-cry. |
| H.M.V. | D 680 | Brünnhilde's battle-cry and Wotan's warning to the Valkyrie with Florence Austral and Robert Radford as Brünnhilde and Wotan (p. 91). |
| H.M.V. | D 681 | Brünnhilde's tragic admonishment of Siegfried (p. 99) is followed by the Valkyries' Ride (p. 105). Albert Coates conducts. |
| Col. | L 1027 | Sir Henry Wood's rendering of the Ride (p. 105) occupies one side of the record, the other comprising the Rhine-maidens' scene from Act 3 of "Götterdämmerung." |
| H.M.V. | D 682 | Brünnhilde gives Sieglinde the broken sword (p. 110). The warring emotions of Brünnhilde's compassion, Sieglinde's terror and Wotan's rage make this one of the most moving operatic reproductions. The other side of this record actually follows the record D 929, and continues the scene between Wotan and his erring child. |
| H.M.V. | D 929 | Wotan overtakes and pronounces sentence upon Brünnhilde (p. 113). |
| H.M.V. | DB 440<br>DB 439 | These records continue the scene from Brünnhilde's pleading in D 682. Wotan (Clarence Whitehill) has two magnificent solos of farewell to Brünnhilde, and calls upon Loge to surround the rock with fire (DB 439), the orchestral finale being splendidly handled (pp. 114–122). |

| Maker. | Catalogue No. | |
|---|---|---|
| Col. | L 1390 | Hamilton Harty conducts Wotan's farewell to Brünnhilde, sung by Norman Allin (p. 120). |

SIEGFRIED

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Col. | L 1399 | The Forge Song is magnificently rendered with powerful dramatic effect by Frank Mullings (p. 134). |
| H.M.V. | D 700 | The Forge Song and the Sword Song constitute one side of the record, the other being given over to the passage from Act 2 describing Mime's attempted poisoning of Siegfried and the Forest Bird's warning. |
| H.M.V. | D 561 | Percy Pitt conducts the Symphony Orchestra in the *Waldweben* interlude. |
| H.M.V. | D 701 | A fine record conducted by Albert Coates leads up to the finale in Act 2 (p. 145), the other side giving Brünnhilde's greeting to the day when she awakens in Act 3 (p. 153). |
| H.M.V. | DB 441 | The tragic encounter between Siegfried and Wotan terminating in the shattering of the spear (p. 150) makes a superb record, the reverse being Wotan's invocation to Erda (p. 147). |
| H.M.V. | D 702 | Comprises duet between Brünnhilde and Siegfried (Tudor Davies and Florence Austral) culminating in the exultant finale (p. 155). |

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| H.M.V. | D 703 | The parting of Brünnhilde and Siegfried, the second portion of the prologue (p. 159). |
| H.M.V. | D 559 | Siegfried's Journey to the Rhine (p. 161), an orchestral record conducted by Percy Pitt, links the preceding with . . . |

# APPENDIX B

| Maker. | Catalogue No. | |
|---|---|---|
| H.M.V. | D 704 | In which Siegfried is welcomed by the Gibichungs (p. 163). The other side of this record consists of Hagen's gloomy Meditation (p. 165). |
| Col. | L 1488 | Hagen's Meditation and also his Call to the Gibich Vassals (p. 171) are superbly rendered by Norman Allin. |
| H.M.V. | D 930 | A double-sided record consisting of the Summoning of the Vassals and including the highly dramatic choral elements, with Robert Radford as Hagen (p. 171). |
| Plr. | 65696 | The Death of Siegfried (p. 180), sung by Otto Wolf. The other side of this record consists of a solo from " Siegfried," with the *Waldweben* accompaniment. |
| Col. | L 1522 | Hamilton Harty contributes a deeply-considered rendering of the Funeral March (p. 181). |
| H.M.V. | D 502 | Landon Ronald conducts the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra in the Funeral March. |
| H.M.V. | D 705<br>D 706 | Florence Austral as Brünnhilde sings the superlative solo which concludes " The Ring " (pp. 186–188), the vocal and orchestral work here being of the highest excellence in reproduction. |

* * *

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Col. | L 1425<br>L 1426 | The Siegfried Idyll (p. 13) with Albert Coates conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, makes two records of great charm and appeal, whose bearing on the dramas of " The Ring " is, however, only indirect. |

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